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INDIA AND THE RAJ 1919-1947

GLORY, SHAME AND BONDAGE

Volume One

To the memory of
MY PARENTS

INDIA AND THE RAJ 1919-1947

GLORY, SHAME AND BONDAGE

Volume One

Suniti Kumar Ghosh

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Calcutta-700 006

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PREFACE

Historians and political scientists — both Indian and foreign — are almost unanimous that the Indian National Congress led the Indian people to freedom from imperialist rule; that Gandhi, who was its leader for about three decades, awakened them from their slumber and fashioned for them a unique weapon — satyagraha — which defeated one of the mightiest empires of the world; and that it was the Congress leadership which forged a great nation in the fire of this struggle.

Are these long-cherished assumptions correct? Whom did the Congress leadership represent? Were the Congress leaders great anti-imperialist crusaders, as conventional historiography represents them? Did they really seek to establish a sovereign nation-state or to achieve self-government within the imperialist system — "a privilege...to have a decent place in the household of King George the Fifth" (as G. D. Birla put it in 1932)? Were the anti-colonial struggles, waged independently of the Congress by the peasantry, the working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie, complementary to the movements led by the Congress, as it is generally assumed, or of an antagonistic character? Against whom was the weapon of satyagraha aimed?

Depending mainly on primary sources, this book seeks to find out answers to these and related questions. It is about both the domains of Indian politics — elite politics as well as politics of the people — chiefly during the period from 1919 (when Gandhi began to dominate Congress politics) to 1947.

This volume ends with the events of March 1931; the story is traced to 1947 in Volume II.

It may kindly be noted that, if not otherwise mentioned, the emphasis on words or sentences is ours.

I am deeply grateful to several friends of mine who have given me generous help in preparing this book.

I regret to note that for reasons beyond our control the publication of this volume has been delayed.

10 Raja Rajkrishna Street
Suite 8, Calcutta-700006
2 June 1989.

SUNITI KUMAR GHOSH

ABBREVIATIONS

AICC : All India Congress Committee.
AITUC : All India Trade Union Congress.
CEHI : *Cambridge Economic History of India.*
CI : Communist International.
CPI : Communist Party of India.
CWC : Congress Working Committee.
CWG : *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.*
CWL : *Collected Works of Lenin.*
Documents : *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India (ed. by Adhikari).*
Encyclopaedia : *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress.*
EPW : *Economic and Political Weekly.*
FICCI Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
GOI : Government of India.
IAR : *Indian Annual Register.*
IESHR : *Indian Economic and Social History Review.*
JN Papers : Jawaharlal Nehru Papers.
PCC : Provincial Congress Committee.
PT Papers : Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers.
RTC : Round Table Conference.
SWM : *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung.*
SWN : *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru.*
TOP : *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7.*
WPP : Workers' and Peasants' Party.

The Roman numeral after a book indicates the number of the volume and the Arabic numeral the page number.

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CHAPTER ONE

'DOMAINS OF POLITICS'

Two Contending Forces

During the long colonial rule two contending forces emerged in Indian society: one consisted of the peasantry including the *adivasis*, the artisans and factory workers, and the urban petty bourgeoisie, while the other comprised the big comprador bourgeoisie (commercial or commercial-cum-industrial), big landlords and princes, and a privileged stratum of elite intellectuals—big lawyers, doctors, high government officials, etc., imbued with the values of the alien rulers and full of faith in the goodness and progressive character of their rule. While the latter owed their existence, prosperity and privileges to colonial rule and pursued the politics of collaboration and compromise with imperialism, the former were victims of exploitation and oppression by imperialism and its native collaborators, and their politics, whether always sufficiently articulated or not, was the politics of uncompromising struggle against both.

But it would be folly to assume that *politically*, the two camps were sharply demarcated. Rather, the relationship was highly complex. Though the economic interests of the peasants, workers and the urban petty bourgeoisie sharply clashed with those of the princes, landlords and the big bourgeois who served as intermediaries of imperialist capital, the paradox is that, for historical reasons to which we shall refer later, the political representatives of the last-named classes were astute enough from about the end of the First World War to confuse the super-exploited masses and rally them at times behind themselves and sometimes to derail, divert and suppress their struggles in collusion with the raj. While opposing genuine national liberation, they waved the banner of anti-colonial struggle as a shrewd tactic. The occasional movements they were forced to initiate in order to forestall anti-imperialist struggles assumed the character of a national liberation struggle only when these crossed the limits set by the leadership. And, as we shall see, when these—the Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919, the Non-co-operation Movement in 1920-22 and the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-31—threatened to acquire this character, they were hastily, abruptly withdrawn, thus plunging the country into the depths of frustration and demoralization.

The Anti-Colonial Forces

During colonial rule the most exploited sections of the people were the peasantry, rather the poor and landless peasants, and the artisans, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the people. The peasant who had enjoyed before the advent of British rule the hereditary right of occupancy of the land was deprived of it under the agrarian systems the British introduced. A new semi-feudal structure that would serve the interests of the British bourgeoisie was raised in place of the old one that was mostly dismantled. A new legal system based on concepts of private property and contract was introduced. On the other hand, the extraction of the maximum surplus from the peasant's produce became the basis of the early colonial system of plunder. The policy of maximization of land revenue in order to wring a surplus to finance the purchase of goods exported from here by the East India Company led to the colossal destruction of men and productive forces. On coming to India in 1789 as Governor General, Lord Cornwallis recorded : "I may safely assert that one third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."[1]

In the first few decades of the 19th century, India was converted into a raw material appendage of Britain and a market for its manufactures. Profits from *unequal* trade were added to the rent-revenue as another main source of colonial plunder. For the realization of the maximum rent-revenue, which remained till 1850 "the basic pillar of British colonialism",[2] and of profits from the unequal exchange, the colonialists re-established and strengthened feudal landlordism on a new basis and encouraged the growth of comprador trade and usury capital. Everywhere coercion was used to extort the maximum rent or revenue as well as various *abwabs* (illegal exactions) from the peasant producers. The policy of perpetuating feudal survivals and the feudal mode of extracting the peasant's surplus as land revenue or rent enabled the British bourgeoisie to appropriate a large part of the peasant's produce at abominably cheap prices.

Among the main features of the land revenue systems introduced by the British were : first, the land-tax and rent, appropriated by the British bourgeoisie through the colonial state machinery and by the native landlords, took not only the entire amount of the surplus labour but also a considerable part of the necessary labour of the peasant. He was not only ground down to the barest minimum of means of subsistence but even that minimum often eluded him. As the agricultural productivity was low, the amount of surplus labour was small, but there was a very high degree of exploitation of the peasants. Second, the rent that the direct producers paid to the landlords or directly to the colonial state was not capitalist land rent representing an excess over profit but the most ruthless and savage feudal land rent. Third, the appropriation of the land-tax and rent by the colonial state and the landlords was in the main coercive : extra-economic compulsion was even more intensified than before.[3]

In the new climate created by the agrarian systems imposed by the British, usury had a phenomenal growth. For meeting the exorbitant demands for land-tax or rent and also for his subsistence—not for investment in productive activities—the peasant was forced to depend on the usurer.[4] The usurer made it comparatively easy for the colonialists to realize the land-tax or rent from the peasant proprietors or tenants as well as from the landlords, who also took loans to pay the revenue by due dates. In colonial India, while usury capital sided with the colonial masters and serviced themechanism of tribute-extraction, it caused disintegration of the small peasant economy and ruined both the peasants and handicraftsmen who could not escape its meshes. Because of the overcrowding of agriculture due to the destruction of "the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry" and because of the pauperization of large masses of peasants and artisans, the parasitical growth of usury led to wide prevalence of debt bondage.

With the penetration of commodity-money relations into the countryside, the ownership of land was being increasingly transferred from peasants to a new breed of usurer-cum-traders—the *mahajans*. When the peasants were forced to sell their holdings or lost them to the mortgagees, they were not driven off the land, but were bound to it again by the new owners and tilled it on a crop-sharing basis. The usurer-landlords seized most of the products—the surplus product as well as much of the necessary product—of the peasant's labour without making any investment. Parasitic landlordism thus flourished throughout India. "In the Deccan, for example", writes D. R. Gadgil, "the Marwari [the usual immigrant trader and usurer there] never wanted to take possession of the land; in many cases he did not have the land transferred to himself legally, but it was still allowed to remain in the old cultivator's name; the Marwari merely appropriated to himself the entire profits of cultivation in virtue of the large number of debt-bonds that he held. . . Thus was a great portion of the Deccan peasant class reduced to virtual serfdom."[9]

The exorbitant revenue demand and payment of it in money forced peasants to grow commercial crops like indigo, cotton and jute required by British industry as raw materials. The peasants, especially in cash-crop growing areas, became victims not only of feudal oppression but also of the colonial oppression as appendages to the speculators' market controlled by British agency houses, exchange banks and Indian compradors. The fabulous amounts of commercial profit earned by the British bourgeoisie and their Indian compradors were not the normal commercial profit but speculation profit of a colonial and semi-feudal character obtained by coercion and swindling.

The agrarian systems introduced by the British, observes Barrington Moore Jr., "formed the basis of a political and economic system in which the foreigner, landlord, and the moneylender took the economic surplus away from the peasantry, failed to invest it in industrial growth and thus ruled out the possibility of repeating Japan's way of entering the modern era. .. *The Indian peasant was suffering many of the pains of primitive capitalist accumulation, while Indian society reaped none of its benefits.*"[6]

Among the most wretched of the earth were (and are) the *adivasis* or tribal people of India, who today constitute about seven per cent of its total population. Many of them had been driven to hilly regions, forests or places near them. Most of them were agriculturists but the land was poor and could not provide them with the minimum subsistence. The forest satisfied many of their wants. It gave them food, fruits, nuts, yam, flowers and the meat of the animals they hunted ; it provided them with fuel and with materials for building their huts and served as pasture for their cattle and other animals. During colonial rule these simple, honest and unsophisticated people were deprived of their land and forests. The forests came to be owned by the state, the tribals were punished for felling trees, collecting food or fuel or sending their cattle there. Their entire way of life came under attack with the advent of colonial rule which deprived them of their traditional forest rights. There was no end of oppression practised on them by forest officials, revenue collectors and minions of law and order. In many regions European and Indian planters, mine-owners and industrialists drove them away from the lands which had been their homes. Hosts of traders, money-lenders and officials from the plains entered their areas, robbed them in the name of trade, cheated them of their lands and turned many of them who stayed into bond slaves by fraud and chicanery. Thousands migrated to become *coolies* in distant plantations or mines.

Another class of the Indian society, which was almost ruined under the impact of colonial rule, was the artisans. After the establishment of British rule in Bengal and some other parts of India, the East India Company and its agents virtually reduced petty commodity producers, especially weavers (for whose goods there was a great demand in Europe), into serfs whom they coerced into selling their products much below their value. The artisans were compelled to accept advances made by middlemen on behalf of the Company and were virtually turned into debt-slaves. Though production for private consumers was more profitable, they were forced to work for the Company.[7]

In 1783, the House of Commons Select Committee on Administration of Justice in India remarked :

"This letter contains a perfect plan of policy, both of compulsion and encouragement which must in a very considerable degree operate destructively to the manufactures of Bengal. *Its effects must be to change the whole face of the industrial country, in order to render it a field for the produce of crude materials subservient to the manufactures of Great Britain.*"[8]

Not only cotton and silk industries but ore mining, iron and steel, paper, ship-building, etc., gradually perished with their indigenous know-how, and India was transformed into what Montgomery Martin called "the agricultural farm of England."[9]

The Revolts of the Peasants and Artisans

The peasants dispossessed of their traditional occupancy rights and artisans plundered by the colonial masters and then robbed of their livelihood by the invasion of British factory-made goods, rose in numerous revolts against the rule that almost strangled them. *The anti-colonial struggle in India is almost as old as colonial rule itself.* During the first hundred and more years of colonial rule, the *adivasis*, other poor and landless peasants and former artisans, who had swelled the ranks of poor and landless peasants, were in the forefront of the innumerable struggles against the alien rule. At that stage the peasants were the main victims of savage exploitation and oppression by the unholy trinity—the colonialists, the native landlords and merchants-cum-usurers, products and props of the colonial regime.[10] Of all contradictions of the Indian society at the time, the contradiction between these forces was the most bitter. The peasants and artisans driven to desperation often rose arms in hand against the colonial rulers and their native agents. Among the great peasant and *adivasi* revolts which aimed at overthrowing colonial rule were the revolt of the 'sannyasins' and 'fakirs'[11] (the first widespread peasant revolt against British rule, which, beginning in 1763, went through different phases until it was finally suppressed in 1800), the revolt of the hillmen and. peasants of Birbhum, Bishnupur and contiguous areas in 1789-91, the Chuar rebellions of 1769-70 and 1798-9 (which extended from Midnapur to Bankura, Manbhum and contiguous districts and which broke out from time to time in a wide area including Chota Nagpur and Western Bengal throughout the early half of the 19th century), the insurrection of the *paiks* in Orissa (1817-8), the Wahabi revolts in certain parts of India including some districts of Bengal in 1831 and 1838-47 (which waved the Muslim religious banner but which were essentially struggles of the poor and landless peasants against the alien rulers, landlords and moneylenders), the revolt of the Kols of Chota Nagpur (1831-2), the resistance of the Bhils in Khandesh and neighbouring areas (1818-31), the revolts of the Kolis which broke out in Gujarat and several districts of Maharashtra between 1824 and 1848, the "long and harassing hill warfare" waged by the Khasis (1829-33), the Santal rebellion of 1855-6 under the leadership of legendary Sidhu and Kanu (which spread over half of Bhagalpur, the greater part of the old Birbhum district which included the Santal Parganas, and neighbouring areas, the Gudem-Rampa risings in Andhra (which began in 1839),[12] the uprising of the *adivasis*, organized and led by Vasudeo Balvant Phadke in a large area in Maharashtra[13], the Moplah (or Mappila) revolts in Malabar in 1836-1896 (which, though revolts of the oppressed peasants against oppressive landlords and the raj, acquired a Muslim religious tinge) and the Munda tribal revolt under Birsa in Ranchi in Chota Nagpur in the 1890s. The peasants and artisans rose in these and innumerable other struggles. In most cases their conscious aim was to end British rule and the oppression of the raj's henchmen in the regions where they dwelt. But there were leaders among them like Phadke and Alluri Sri Rama Raju (the leader of the Gudem-Rampa rebellion of 1922-4) who dreamt of liberating the whole of India.[14] The militant peasants showed exemplary bravery and courage and preferred death to surrender before much superior, armed and organized forces of their enemy. These struggles were mostly scattered and the heroic self-sacrifice of the peasants and artisans could not avail them before militarily overwhelming forces, equipped with fire-arms, of which they had none or few. Only the revolt of 1857-8, the First War of Indian Independence, which the British dubbed 'the Sepoy Mutiny', was much more widespread, and the revolt of the Indian soldiers (peasants in military uniforms) and masses of peasants in wide areas proved a threat to British rule. Some aggrieved princes and feudals joined the rebels but, as Percival Spear writes, "the princes in general stood firm, to be described by a grateful Canning as 'breakwaters in a storm', and... so did the bulk of the landholders."[15] For lack of organization and unified leadership the First War of Independence was drowned in blood. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the peasants carried on their struggles against colonial rule almost single-handed. Only in some struggles alliance was forged with dispossessed, small princes or landlords, round whom the peasants rallied. The revolts of the poligars in some districts of present Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the early nineteenth century were of this type.

It was only from about the turn of the twentieth century that the urban petty bourgeoisie and, still later, the factory workers entered the arena of political struggle. Patriotic young men belonging to the petty bourgeois radical intelligentsia started joining the anti-imperialist struggle towards the end of the nineteenth century. Their struggle first assumed the form of terrorist actions. Maharashtra was one of the earliest centres of their activities. The British plan to cut Bengal into two pieces and emasculate the Bengali nation provoked resistance. Revolutionary, secret organizations of youths sprang up in Bengal, which aimed at achieving full freedom for India. Gradually, they spread to the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and other provinces.

In the beginning their ideas and organizations in Bengal bore strong influence of the Hindu religion. Mostly Hindus, these youths drew their inspiration from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda and from the freedom struggles of the Irish and of the Italians in the nineteenth century. They indulged in terrorist actions to combat state terrorism and fervently believed that such actions would arouse the people. As Gopal Halder writes, "Many of them accepted these [terroristic actions] as temporary and unwelcome devices of defence and counter-attack. Almost all took to these as necessary steps in the process of revolution, in the preparation for guerrilla campaigns, defection of Indian forces, and finally, for armed insurrection on a wide national scale."[16] The heroism, self-sacrifice and love for the country of many of these youths can hardly be surpassed. To quote Gopal Halder again, "The best elements [rather some of the best elements] of the country subscribed to this course for thirty long years."[17] One may recall what Gopinath Saha, facing certain death, said at the court which was trying him : "May every drop of my blood sow the seeds of freedom in every home of India."[18]

The chief weakness of the national revolutionaries lay in the fact that, except the Ghadr revolutionaries in the Punjab, they were alienated from the peasantry and workers—the basic masses.

The working class joined the political struggle even later—after World War I. Earlier, in 1903, Bombay had witnessed perhaps the first great political action of workers in the subcontinent. At the end of June and in the month of July, when the trial of Bal Gangadhar Tilak was held, thousands of workers downed tools, joined other sections of the people and clashed frequently with the police. On 23 July, the day after Tilak had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment, one hundred thousand workers went on a political strike, which continued till 28 July. On 24 July the masses fought street battles with troops commanded by British officers in different parts of Bombay and many became martyrs.[19] This great political action of the Indian working class was hailed by Lenin.

Till the end of World War I working class organizations were extremely few. If was after the war that workers' strikes became frequent and working class organizations grew quickly. On behalf of a communist party that was formed in exile, manifestoes were issued in 1921 and 1922, raising the demand for full independence for India. The Workers' and Peasants' Parties that were set up in 1926 and after raised the demand for independence in successive annual Congress sessions in 1926, 1927 and 1928. In 1928 the working class was in the van of the national struggle for emancipation. In February, to the dislike of the top Congress leaders, it went on political strikes and staged demonstrations to mark their protest against the arrival of the Simon Commission. Towards the end of December, about fifty thousand workers headed by Communist leaders occupied the pandal of the Congress session then being held in Calcutta, held a meeting, passed a resolution demanding complete freedom for India and raised the slogan for an 'Independent Socialist Republic of India.'[20] By this time the working class had come to play a significant role in the politics of the sub-continent.

In India, the national bourgeoisie seems to have played no independent role as it did in China at one time. In China Sun Yat-sen, its political representative, led armed revolutionary struggles against feudalism and imperialism, but there was no Sun Yat-sen in India. It seems that the national bourgeoisie here supported *at times* the national revolutionaries and the genuine left wing within the Congress which believed in complete independence and in the armed overthrow of imperialist rule. At other times it seems to have lent its support to the top leadership of the Congress. On account of economic flabbiness, its politics were marked by vacillations and contradictions.

It was the peasants, the workers and the urban petty bourgeois who constituted the main force that was in fundamental conflict with the raj as well as with the big landlords, *mahajans* and the big bourgeois who were the intermediaries of British capital. It is they who sought genuine independence, which means severance of all ties with imperialism, and their struggles formed ceaseless streams of anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggle, which grew in vastness after World War I. But the streams mostly remained separate and could hardly merge in a broad national liberation struggle. What was tragic was the fact that the working class was theoretically and organizationally weak and failed to establish its political hegemony over all other anti-imperialist classes and to lead them in a struggle for the emancipation of the nations of the Indian sub-continent. Numerous struggles of the workers, peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie broke out in the years immediately after World War I as well as in the late twenties and the early thirties. The tide became vaster in the post-Second World War years, but in the absence of a revolutionary leadership to lead and integrate all the sectional struggles into a vast force capable of overthrowing imperialist rule and its domestic props, they were all put down by the raj assisted by its native allies.

The Props of Colonial Rule

The other forces in Indian society during the colonial rule comprised, as we have said, princes and big landlords, the compradors of British capital and the upper stratum of professional classes and high government officials, many of whom had a landlord class origin. With the advent of British rule, a new class of feudal landlords mostly supplanted the old feudal landlords in regions like Bengal where the Permanent Settlement was introduced. In the *raiyatwari* and *mahalwari* areas, too, a class of landlords arose who exploited the actual cultivators by squeezing out of them the maximum feudal rent and by practising usury. The big landlords and big *mahajans*, like the princes, who were puppets controlled by the imperial power, were deeply interested in the preservation of colonial rule and served as its props.

The old class of Indian merchants was almost liquidated and a new class of compradors emerged.[21] These served as agents of foreign capital : they procured goods from the hinterland for the foreign merchant firms to export and sold on the domestic market goods imported by the latter. When the brokers and *banians*[22] of European firms, big *mahajans* and those who, while serving as brokers to British firms, like the Birlas, Bangurs, Hukumchands and so on, thrived *mainly* as gamblers and speculators on the different commodities and share markets, invested in industry, their compradorial role, contrary to what many people assert, did not come to an end.[23] Their interests coalesced with those of imperialist capital and they helped its economic as well as political penetration into the sub-continent. Whatever contradictions existed between foreign capital and Indian big capital were over the respective shares of the spoils : it was their collusion to fleece the people that was primary, the contradiction that existed could generally be resolved within the system itself and was secondary.

This was not true of all Indian capital. There was real antagonism between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the Indian small and middle bourgeois.[24]

Besides, upper class intellectuals like big lawyers, doctors and high government officials formed a privileged stratum. As Lord Macaulay had expected, they fulfilled the role of intellectual intermediaries between the alien rulers and the people. Interestingly, Dadabhai Naoroji, thrice president of the Indian National Congress, approvingly quoted Sir Bartle Frere,[25] who had said :

"And now, wherever I go, I find the best exponents of the policy of the English Government, and the most able co-adjutors in adjusting that policy to the peculiarities of the natives of India, among the ranks of the educated natives."[26]

Naoroji himself observed : "... they [the educated classes in India] are the powerful chain by which India is becoming more and more firmly linked with Britain."[27] By the educated classes, Naoroji had certainly in mind their upper stratum which mostly provided the leadership of the political organizations of the landlords and the big bourgeoisie.

The upper middle class intellectuals, B. B. Misra rightly observes, "constituted the indigenous social buttress for British rule in India, a prop that had emerged from the application of the social and educational policies of men like Charles Grant, Macaulay and Sir Charles Wood ..."[28]

The fate of these classes or strata was intimately bound up with the fate of the colonial regime. Naturally, colonial rule was to them a divine dispensation. Dadabhai Naoroji represented them when he wrote :

"I believe that the result of the British rule *can be* a blessing to India and a glory to England—a result worthy of the foremost and most humane nation on the face of the earth."[29]

Presiding over the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906, Naoroji said that "the moment a people came under the British flag they are 'free' and British 'fellow citizens.' We Indians have been free British citizens as our birth-right, as 'if born and living in England' from the first moment we came under the British flag."[30]

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, another Congress stalwart whom Gandhi acknowledged as his *guru*, shared Naoroji's view. To quote H. N. Brailsford,

"Gokhale and his generation accepted the British conquest as an unalterable fact decreed, as I have heard him say with a melancholy smile, 'by the mysterious providence of God'. His utmost ambition was at some distant day to achieve 'colonial self-government'."[31]

Surendra nath Banerjee, another stalwart. cherished the ideal to "work with unwavering loyalty to the British connection—for the object was not the supersession of British rule in India, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalising of its spirit, the ennobling of its character and placing it on the unchangeable foundation of a nation's affections."[32]

Gandhi, who is said to have led India to freedom, declared, while in South Africa, that "Providence has put the English and the Indians together, and has placed in the hands of the former the destinies of the latter"; that "Those who have faith in God recognize that the British do not rule over India without His will"; that the Indians "are proud to be under the British Crown"; that "the sterling loyalty of the people at large saved India for the Empire" from "the evil-minded" who took part in the Great Revolt of 1857-8; that "we stand to lose by ending British rule," and so on. He described Queen Victoria's proclamation of November 1858 as the Indian people's "charter of liberty," "the Magna Charta of the

British Indians", and spoke proudly of "the great services India has always rendered to the Mother Country ever since Providence brought loyal Hind under the flag of Britannia".[33]

Proposing a toast to the British Empire in April 1915, after his return from South Africa, Gandhi said at Madras :

> "...I discovered that the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love...and one of these ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for energies and efforts [sic]..."[34]

In October 1917, the all-India deputation, which included Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, B. G. Tilak, M. A. Jinnah and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, waited on E. Montagu, Secretary of State, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy. The Congress-League joint address, which was presented to them, acknowledged "the great and good work that Great Britain has accomplished in India" and stated :

> "It was a great truth which Lord Ripon of blessed memory felicitously uttered when he described educated Indians as the *children of British Rule. ...The Indian National Congress, which a renowned Indian statesman described as 'the greatest triumph of British administration and a crown of glory to the great British nation'* is the highest expression of this sacred national aspiration, and the ideal of the Congress is also the ideal of the most important organization of Indian Musalmans, the All-India Moslem League."[35]

Though Gandhi became critical of the raj at times for reasons which will be discussed later, he retained his deep faith in Britain's civilizing mission till the end. At his meeting with the European Association at the Grand Hotel in Calcutta in July 1925, he declared :

> "I am dying to co-operate....*The destinies of England and India have been thrown together and have been thrown together for a good purpose, namely, the service of humanity* .."[36]

Pandit Motilal Nehru, whose father, a *kotwal* of Delhi, had fled with his family during the Great Revolt of 1857-8,[37] was grateful for the benefits conferred by British rule on India. He organized the delegates from his province to the Congress session in Calcutta in 1906 in order to oppose the resolution in favour of self-government, "which to him meant nothing less ridiculous than giving 'a formal notice to the British Government to quit and hand over the reins of government to the oily Babus' [of Bengal]."[38] As president of the United Provinces Provincial Conference in March 1907, he said that India's gains would have been greater if John Bull had been sufficiently aroused. For, it was his firm belief that John Bull "means well—it is not in his nature to mean ill".[39] He opposed boycott of British goods and, deprecating unconstitutional methods, declared that *"the reforms we wish to bring about must come through the medium of constituted authority,"*[40] i.e., as gifts from the raj. To him, the Indian Civil Service, "the steel frame" of British administration in India, was "the greatest of the services in the world which has produced some of the most distinguished builders of the British Empire"[41] and, at first, he wanted his son to join it. Unlike Subhas Chandra Bose, the younger Nehru, during his stay at Cambridge, "did not then view with any strong disfavour the idea of joining the I. C. S. and thus becoming a cog in the British Government's administrative machine in India."[42] As a loyal subject, Motilal mourned the death of King Edward VII and celebrated the coronation of George V.[43] He attended the Emperor's Delhi durbar in December 1911, "with sword and everything complete" bought for him by his son in London.[44] In August 1917, he "called on the British public, *'the sole tribunal appointed by Providence,'* to mediate between the Indian people and the bureaucracy."[45]

It is worth noting that these Congress leaders always distinguished between the British ruling class and the bureaucracy governing India on its behalf. Their loyalty to and admiration for the rulers in England, the fount of all power, were exuberant. It is the local agents, not their masters, whom they blamed for whatever grievances they had against 'the un-British rule in India'.

We have already noted that while at Cambridge the younger Nehru was not averse to serving "as a cog in the British Government's administrative machine in India." "In 1912," writes S. Gopal, "after listening to Fenner Brockway urging that India should move on to independence, Jawaharlal criticized the speaker privately for his extremist speech."[46]

Vallabhbhai Patel, too, "believed that India's association with Britain was the outcome of divine dispensation...Whatever little he had read till then, especially in English, had deepened his conviction that the British were indeed the chosen children of God."[47]

These ideologues of the domestic allies of the raj seemed to welcome the burden of slavery that crushed the basic masses. And their aim was to replace guadually the white bureaucracy by a brown one under the umbrella of imperial Britain. And they hopefully believed that their self-rule or *swaraj* would be attained through the good will of the British rulers.

G. D. Birla, an outstanding leader of the Indian big bourgeoisie and one of the closest associates of Gandhi, wrote :

"..there was no doubt that ever since Macaulay's day the declared policy of the British Parliament and the accepted national programme of the British people as a whole—who, as Lord Halifax once said, can really conceive of no other—was that Indians should progressively learn to 'govern themselves and do so as soon as they could."[48]

To throw a romantic veil over their actual role in the colony, it has been the imperialist theme that the imperialists had a "white man's burden" to civilize the natives, that they had brought light into the midst of darkness, that they had rescued the people of the colony from the stagnant backwardness in which they had been wallowing. It claimed that as a progressive, regenerating force one of its missions was to teach the natives the art of good government and to retire from the colony as soon as that noble task was done. As Harry Magdoff writes, this was "the dominant imperialist theme" of the late 19th and the early 20th century.[49] It was this imperialist propaganda that shaped the mind and outlook and policies of the classes that were the beneficiaries of the

British rule in India as well as those of their political representatives. From Dadabhai Naorojis, Pherozeshah Mehtas, Surendra Nath Banerjeas, Gokhales and Jamsetji Tatas to Gandhis, Motilals, Patels, Prasads, Dorabjee Tatas and Birlas—all imbibed this imperialist teaching well and were imbued with deep faith in Britain's 'manifest destiny' to civilize the Indians and teach them the art of Government. These eminent men (and women) have been acclaimed as great nationalists and patriots. Their patriotism seems to have been of a special hue : theirs was what may be called 'loyal patriotism'—a combination of solicitude for the interests of the classes they represented and loyalty to the British connection.

Socially and economically, the Indian big bourgeosie, big landlords and princes, and elite intellectuals maintained close relations ; despite minor contradictions, their class interests converged. In Western Europe, the bourgeoisie led democratic revolutions, overthrew feudalism and established bourgeois nation states. Here, on the contrary, the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie has been reactionary from its very birth. It has not only served imperialist capital as its intermediary but has relied on princes and big landlords for setting up its industries. Much of the capital for the Tata Iron and Steel Company, the hydro-electric projects of the Tatas, Tata Chemicals, etc., came from the princes—Gwalior, Baroda, etc. Gwalior and other princes subscribed capital for and assisted in other ways the Birla enterprises like Gwalior Rayon. Instances can be multiplied. As R. K. Hazari said, among the largest long-term investors were the princely states and rich zamindars.[30] The Indian big bourgeoisie itself was involved in feudal landownership and extraction of rent. Many of the big bourgeois, including Jamsetji Tata, G. D. Birla, the Bangurs and Goenkas, have been big landlords, owners of extensive real estates and usurers. It was not surprising that the interests of these classes and strata demanded that they should oppose the anti-colonial struggles which sought to overthrow imperialism and sever all links with it.

It is worth remembering what Mao Tsetung said :

"...the western bourgeoisie created two categories of people in the East, a small minority, the flunkeys of imperialism, and a majority which is opposed to imperialism and consists of the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie and the intellectuals coming from these classes. Those in the majority group are all gravediggers of imperialism...."[51]

India's anti-imperialist struggle is inextricably linked with the anti-feudal struggle. The national liberation struggle of the Indian people must be directed against imperialism as well as against the domestic feudal and comprador elements. Like every other national struggle, it is essentially a class struggle against the foreign imperialist bourgeoisie, the native comprador big bourgeoisie and the feudal class. As it is the peasantry that can be the main force of the revolution, its twin targets must be imperialism and feudalism and its immediate objectives national freedom and democracy.

The Birth of the Congress

It was to frustrate and forestall such anti-imperialist, anti-feudal national liberation struggles that the organization named the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. It is interesting that, speaking at the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee of the second Round Table Conference on 15 September 1931, Gandhi said that it was "a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it [the Congress] was first conceived in an English brain: Allan Octavius Hume we know as the father of the Congress".[52] And, later, in the letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, dated 13 June 1946, Gandhi described the Congress and the Muslim League as "both your creations".[53] Ironically, the Indians who collaborated with high British officials to set up the Congress, are supposed to have inaugurated Indian nationalism, and the Congress, which Aurobindo Ghosh in his revolutionary days described as "unnational Congress",[54] is represented in history as having initiated and carried forward the nationalist movement in India.

A. O. Hume, who retired in 1882 as secretary of a department of the Government of India after thirty-three years of coven service,[55] undertook to set up the Congress. It is Viceroy Lord Dufferin who advised him not to confine the scope of the all-India meeting in December 1885, which Hume had proposed, to the discussion of only social questions but to enlarge its scope to include political questions. Hume also paid a visit to England and was suitably advised by Lord Dalhousie, Lord Ripon and other eminent Britishers.[56] Armed with their advice, Hume proceeded to found the Congress with the help of leading Indian politicians—all loyalists—in order to combat the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.[57]

In a memorandum which Sir William Wedderburn, Hume's biographer, who, after retiring from the Indian Civil Service in 1887, presided over the annual Congress sessions in 1889 and 1910, found among Hume's papers, Hume wrote that before he founded the Congress, he had been persuaded by seven large volumes containing a vast number of entries—"communications from over thirty thousand different reporters"—to believe that "we were in imminent danger of a terrible outbreak". He had been afraid that men of the lowest classes, "pervaded with a sense of the hopelessness of the existing state of affairs...were going to do *something...and that something meant violence*". He had feared that "a certain small number of the educated classes... would join the movement, assume here and there the lead, give the outbreak cohesion, and direct it as a national revolt".[58]

Though the First War of Indian Independence was crushed with extreme savagery, peasant struggles were breaking out in different places in the sixties and seventies of the last century. We have already referred to the Wahabi revolts, Rampa and Moplah uprisings in Andhra and Malabar. In Gudem-Rampa, the agency area of the districts of Visakhapatnam and Godavari in Andhra, there was a widespread rebellion in 1879-80. The rebellion of the *adivasis* of this region spilled over into neighbouring tracts and an area of over 5,000 square miles is estimated to have been in revolt. The guerrilla war which started in March 1879 continued till November 1880. The whole of the Rampa region and areas adjacent to it were in the hands of the rebels by the middle of 1879. Several districts of Bengal were shaken in 1859-61 by the Indigo revolt in which millions of peasants took part. It led Viceroy Canning to observe: "For about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi."[59] In the early seventies there was peasant struggle against feudal oppression in two North Bengal districts—Pabna and Bogura. In 1875 there was a violent upheaval among peasants in some districts of Maharashtra, which was directed against unscrupulous Marwari immigrant usurers. After some set-back in 1876, the struggle revived in 1878-9. It was about this time in 1879 that Phadke led an unsuccessful guerrilla struggle. Earlier, in 1857, inspired by the Great Revolt in the north, the Bheels, a tribal people, rose arms in hand in Khandesh and neighbouring areas to drive out the British. In the Punjab, the Namdharis, a Sikh sect, led a revolt in the early seventies.

In North-East India the tribal people were on the war-path. The Jaintias took up arms to drive out the British from the Jaintia Hills (now a part of the state of Meghalaya) and carried on a guerrilla war from 1862 to 1864. The Nagas, Garos and Mizos also put up armed resistance against the British. In Nowgong, Kamrup and Darrang in Assam, there were manifestations of widespread discontent. Discontent was also rife among the tribals in Keonjhar in Orissa and in some parts of Central India (now Madhya Pradesh).

Observing the situation in India from a distance, Karl Marx wrote to N. F. Danielson on 19 February 1881:

"...what they [the British] take from them [the Indians] *without any equivalent* and *quite apart* from what they appropriate to themselves annually *within* India,—speaking only of the *value of the commodities* the Indians have gratuitously and annually to *send over* to England—it amounts to *more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India*! This is a bleeding process with a vengeance! The famine years are pressing each other and *in dimensions* till now not yet suspected in Europe! There is an actual conspiracy going on wherein Hindus and Mussulmans co-operate; the British Government is aware that something is 'brewing'..."[60]

There was no conspiracy in the literal sense ; the struggles were not co-ordinated. But the fact is, in the years preceding the formation of the Congress, the fire of discontent against the colonial state and its proteges—the British planters and native landlords and usurers—smouldered throughout India and it blazed up in the form of armed struggle or violent resistance in some regions of the sub-continent. The British ex-civilian was sure that

> "A safety valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and *no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised.*"[61]

Hume, who was general secretary of the Congress for the first twenty-two years, did not keep his object a secret from the members of the Indian elite with whose support he sought to execute his plan. As he put it, one of the three "fundamental objects" of the Congress was "the consolidation of the Union between England and India". He said :

> "Do you not realize that by getting hold of the great lower middle classes before the development of the reckless demagogues, to which the next quarter of a century must otherwise give birth, and *carefully inoculating them with a mild and harmless form of the political fever,* we are adopting the only precautionary method against the otherwise inevitable ravages of a violent and epidemic burst of the disorder ?"[62]

In a "Private and Confidential" letter to "Every Member of of the Congress Party", dated 15 February 1892, Hume wrote :

> "You do not, especially the rich and well-to-do, realize that the existing system of administration is not only ill-adapted to the wants of the country, is not only pauperizing the people... but is inevitably preparing the way for one of the most terrible cataclysms in the history of the world....Do not fancy that the Government will be able to protect you or itself. No earthly power can stem an universal agrarian rising in a country like this."[63]

So it was the aim of the Congress to thwart by all means a democratic anti-imperialist revolution that would sweep away both the raj and its domestic props. And, as we shall see, the Congress never swerved from the course that its founders had chalked out.

The Two Domains of Politics

The historians of the 'subaltern school' rightly hold that in colonial India there were two domains of politics—the domain of elite politics and the domain of the politics of the people. To quote Ranajit Guha, "...parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country—that is, the people. This was an *autonomous* domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter."[64] But they assume in their various writings, many of which shed valuable light on hitherto unknown aspects of Indian history, that the objective of elite politics was the attainment of Indian independence.

This assumption, which is held almost as an axiomatic truth, appears to be a concession to elitist historiography. It is our contention that the two domains, despite occasional overlaps, were not only separate but had conflicting aims. Unlike the politics of the people, elite politics—the politics of the big bourgeoisie and the big landlords—never sought freedom outside the orbit of imperialism. What the elite leadership aspired to was self-government within the framework of imperialist rule.[65] It is true that "there was a great deal of overlap" between the two domains, but this overlap arose not because "the more advanced elements among the indigenous elite" initiated struggles "which had more or less clearly defined anti-imperialist objectives" but because their deceptive anti-imperialist stance succeeded in its purpose. As the working class was politically immature, the people failed to see through the anti-imperialist and socialist rhetoric or the highly ethical and religious verbiage. Confused by concerted elite propaganda, they formed their own images of the elite leaders, which were as different from the real selves of the latter as the day is from the night. Speaking of the images of Gandhi, conceived by the people of the district of Gorakhpur, Shahid Amin says : "Thus a 'jaikar' of adoration and adulation [of the *mahatma*] had become the rallying cry for direct action. While such action sought to justify itself by reference to the *Mahatma*, the Gandhi of its rustic protagonists was not as he really was, but as they had thought him up."[66]

In fact, the main object of the elite leadership was to deflect mass struggles from their anti-imperialist objective. It is not true that they even tried to integrate at certain times the two domains of politics. On the contrary, it was their deliberate strategy to keep the masses removed as far as possible from the sphere of active politics and to cast them at best in passive or harmless roles when occasions demanded. The people were asked to ply the *charkha*, observe *hartal*, fast and pray, boycott foreign cloth, manufacture salt for a few months and cast votes in elections in favour of even "lamp posts" which the leadership would erect. When the people overlooked or ignored the limitations imposed on them and came forward to play a more active, militant role and started endowing the movements with the character of a national liberation struggle, the movements were abruptly suspended, and this sudden bottling up of great struggles gave rise to confusion, demoralization and mutual strife.

Indeed, elite politicians cherished deep-seated hatred and hostility towards the domain of the politics of the people. As early as 1909, Gandhi, as he himself pointed out, wrote *Hind Swaraj* (where he formulated his views on the modern civilization and politics) in order to fight "the Indian school of violence, and its prototype in South Africa."[67] By raising the smoke-screen of non violence, which they never practised, except towards the British raj,[68] Gandhi and his close associates tried to combat and suppress all revolutionary struggles of the people. It is our contention that the movements as *planned* by the elite leadership and the struggles of the people were not complementary, as it is often supposed, but were opposed to each other. The former were initiated *primarily* to forestall or divert the people's struggles and sometimes, as in 1946 and 1947, the elite leadership *openly* colluded with the raj to denigrate and suppress them.

It is true that the controlled, limited mass actions within the bounds of non-violence, seemingly anti-imperialist, that Gandhi started in 1919, 1920-21 and 1930-1, helped to spread anti-imperialist feelings among the people. They had, indeed, a dual impact. In order to win the masses over from the path of anti-imperialist struggle when such struggle had already broken out or was about to do so, the Congress leaders were forced to employ some anti-imperialist rhetoric and launch some mass actions, however restricted was their scope. These, no doubt, contributed to the rousing of the masses. On the other hand, they helped to confuse the people and dissipate a revolutionary situation and their abrupt withdrawals would plunge the country into the gloom of frustration and fratricidal strife.

NOTES

1 Cited in H. N. Brailsford, *Subject India*, 16.

2 Irfan Habib, "Colonialization of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900", *Social Scientist*, March 1975, 35.

3 See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, 116-8.

4 A. Sarada Raju, *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency* 1800-1850, 135-41 ; Daniel and Alice Thorner, *Land and Labour in India*, 55 ; Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 360.

5 D. R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times*, 30 ; see also Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 301-2.

6 Barrington Moore, Jr., op cit, 344, 360.

7 William Bolts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, London, 1772 ; cited in Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, 302-4 ; N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, I, 19, 158, 161-70 ; S. Bhattacharyya, "Regional Economy (1757-1857) : Eastern India", in *CEHI*, II, 287-9 ; Sarada Raju, op cit, 172, 173.

8 *Ninth Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Administra-*

tion of Justice in India, 1783, 64 ; cited in R. C. Dutt, *Economic History of India Under Early British Rule*, 45 ; see also P. A. Wadia and K. T. Merchant, *Our Economic Problem*, 414.

9 R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 102-7 ; V. D. Divekar, "Regional Economy (1757-1857) : Western India" and Dharma Kumar, "Regional Economy (1757-1857) : South India", in *CEHI*, II, 348-50, 373, 375.

10 See Suprakash Roy, *Bharater Krisak-Bidroha O Ganatantric Sangram*, I ; Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, *Civic Disturbances during the British Rule in India (1765-1857)* ; Kathleen Gough, "Indian Peasant Uprisings", *Economic and Political Weekly*, IX, Nos. 32-34, Special Number 1974 ; A. R. Desai (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*.

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14 Ibid, 255 ; see also V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, 38, 39 and Arnold, op cit, 135, 141.

15 Percival Spear, *A History of India*, II, 147.

16 Gopal Haldar, "Revolutionary Terrorism", in Atulchandra Gupta (ed.), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, 226 ; see also Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, *In Search of a Revolutionary Ideology and a Revolutionary Programme*, Preface, p. viii.

17 Halder, op cit, 256.

18 Kali Charan Ghosh, *The Roll of Honour*, 371 ; G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents*, II, 401.

19 Sukomal Sen, *Working Class of India*, 108-12.

20 Palme Dutt, op cit, 314.

21 S. K. Ghosh, op cit, 126-35 ; G. D. Sharma, "The Marwaris", in D. Tripathi, *Business Communities of India*, 201.

22 In the 19th century and after, a *banian* was a guarantee broker attached to a European firm. He had to guarantee the reliability of other Indian businessmen dealing with the firm and received a commission on sales.

23 S. K. Ghosh, op cit, chaps. 7 and 8.

24 See Chap. 2 below.

25 Frere was a member of the Supreme Council 1859-62 and Governor of Bombay 1862-67.

26 Quoted in Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, 50.

27 Ibid, 205.

28 B. B. Misra, *The Indian Political Parties*, 216.

29 Naoroji, op cit, 201-2—emphasis in the original ; See also Brailsford, "The Middle Years", in H. S. L. Polak, H. N. Brailsford, Lord Pethick-Lawrence,

Mahatma Gandhi, 98.

30 A. M. Zaidi (chief editor), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, V, 118.

31 Brailsford, *Subject India*, 24. It is quite illuminating that the preamble to the constitution of the Servants of India Society, which was drafted in 1905 by Gokhale himself, says : "Its members frankly accept the British connection as ordained in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence for India's good" (quoted in *Condition of India being the Report of the Delegation sent to India by the India League in 1932*), 113.

32 Quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 266.

33 *CWG*, I (2nd revised edn., 1969), 187, 289 ; III (2nd revised edn., 1979), 377, 398, 431, 432 ; V, 117 ; VII, 6-7 ; VIII, 246.

34 Ibid, XIII, 59.

35 Ibid, XIV, 521.

36 Ibid, XXVII, 418 ; see also XIII, 59.

37 J. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 2.

38 B. N. Pandey, *Nehru*, 41 ; The quotation is from Motilal's letter to Jawaharlal, 27 Dec. 1906, Nehru Papers.

39 Ibid, 41 ; B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus*, 60.

40 Ibid, 61.

41 Ibid, 104.

42 J. Nehru, op cit, 24-5.

43 Pandey, op cit, 43.

44 Ibid, 44 ; Nanda, op cit, 115.

45 S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 33.

46 Ibid, 23-4.

47 V. B. Kulkarni, *The Indian Triumvirate*, 263.

48 G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 246.

49 Harry Magdoff, "Economic Myths and Imperialism", *Monthly Review*, December 1971, 4.

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51 Mao Tsetung, "The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History", *SWM*, IV, 455.

52 *CWG*, XLVIII, 15 ; also XLV, 398.

53 See Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emissary*, 159.

54 Aurobindo Ghosh, "New Lamps for Old", *Indu Prakash* (Bombay), 7 Aug. 1893 ; cited in Gopal Halder, op cit, 232.

55 Nanda, op cit, 45.

56 Ibid.

57 Palme Dutt, op cit, 256-62.

58 Quoted from an extract reproduced in *Ibid*, 259 from Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, Father of the Indian National*

Congress, 1913.

59 Quoted in Nandini Sen, "Indigo Rebellion (1859-61)", in N. R. Roy *et al* (eds.), op cit, 173; Suprakash Roy, op cit, 383.

60 Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, 337—emphasis in the original.

61 Wedderburn, op cit, 77; quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 261.

62 "A. O. Hume on the Aims and Objects of Congress", 30 Apr. 1888, in C. H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan: Select Documents*, 141-3.

63 Government of Bombay, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, II, 116-7; cited in Sehanavis, op cit, 260-1.

64 Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit, 4—emphasis in the original.

65 See Chap. III below.

66 Amin, "Gandhi as Mahatma", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit, 54.

67 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or the Indian Home Rule*, 5.

68 See Chap. III below.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INDIAN BOURGEOISIE AND IMPERIALISM

Ally or Antagonist ?

Is it correct to assert, as we have done, that the Indian big bourgeoisie, like the big landlords, was a prop of colonial rule ? The contrary view is held rather as an axiomatic truth. This question is of major importance, for it is closely related to the questions about the class character of the Congress, the character of the movements waged by its leadership and the nature of the state or states that emerged in the Indian sub-continent in August 1947.

According to Rajani Palme Dutt, whose *India Today* is regarded as a classic, the Indian bourgeoisie occasionally entered into compromise with British imperialism out of fear of the people's revolutionary struggles, but it was genuinely anti-imperialist and spearheaded the struggle for national emancipation. He spoke of the dual character of the Indian bourgeoisie : on the one hand, its contradiction with imperialism was antagonistic ; on the other, it had its contradiction with the people and was haunted by the spectre of social revolution. But he held that, with all its proneness to compromise with imperialism, this class "is in profound conflict with the British bourgeoisie" and "looks to the future of India as an independent nation".[1]

V. I. Pavlov has argued that, during the inter-war years, an antagonistic relation developed between imperialist capital and Indian big capital, which had previously served as the former's comprador, as the sphere of commerce in which the Indian big bourgeoisie collaborated with the British capitalists gradually shrank and as it had to turn to large-scale industry where only it could invest its capital. The world crisis of 1929-33, according to him, brought to an end the phase of collaboration between the two, and the process of transformation of the comprador into the national bourgeoisie was completed; and, as a result, antagonism between them grew. "Therefore", writes Pavlov, "when in 1930-32 the masses of the Indian people...began to fight, the bourgeoisie participated in it and headed the movement." Then, in post-Second World War years, "The inevitably approaching economic catastrophe was indeed the principal objective cause that impelled the whole people of India, including the national bourgeoisie, to unite in a common decisive struggle against the colonial dictatorship."[2] (Later, we shall have occasions to discuss the nature of the big bourgeois participation in and leadership of the 1930-32 struggles as well as the nature of the "common decisive struggle" led by the bourgeoisie "against the colonial dictatorship" in the years after World War II).

Bipan Chandra has put forward his "basic hypothesis" that "the Indian capitalist class had developed a long-term contradiction with imperialism while retaining a relationship of short-term dependence on it and accommodation with it." According to Chandra, this class including its upper stratum has never had, especially not after 1914, any organic link with British capital and "did not become an ally of the British rule in India". He asserts that this class has successfully led anti-imperialist struggles to wrest power by stages by adopting what he ingeniously calls "P.C.P." (pressure—compromise—pressure) strategy and set up an independent bourgeois state.[3]

The Bourgeoisie Divided

It is our contention that the Indian capitalist class comprised and comprises two sections: one that is big is comprador and the other that is small and medium is national (today some of the middle bourgeois also have become comprador); that Bipan Chandra's "basic hypothesis" as regards the upper stratum of the Indian capitalist class is wholly incorrect for, since its origin, this section has developed a long-term dependence on, and collaborated with, imperialism and there have existed contradictions between them that can be resolved within the imperialist system;

that organic links were formed between this section and British capital before and after 1914 ; and that this section was from its very birth an ally of British rule in India.[4]

We shall not repeat here the facts and arguments stated in *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*. We shall confine ourselves here merely to referring to a few important points in support of our contentions, and then add some material to refute the thesis of the Russian writers developed after the mid-fifties that the Indian big bourgeoisie's collusion or collaboration with imperialist capital yielded to antagonism in the period between the inter-war years as well as Bipan Chandra's thesis that the Indian capitalist class including its upper stratum was not an ally of the British rule in India.

There is the usual distinction between the comprador and the national bourgeois that the former serves foreign capital as its agent and helps it to penetrate into the country economically, while the latter seeks independent development of the country's economy and of his own interests (though sometimes dependent on imperialist capital for market or capital goods) and is, in the ultimate analysis, antagonistic to imperialist capital. Besides, there are other important differences between the two in India. They are poles apart in respect of their social origins, their ways of primary accumulation of capital and their knowledge of production processes or total lack of it. The Indian compradors sometimes belonged to an old business house with a network of branches, which carried on *sharafi* business (indigenous banking) and combined with it trading activities. As *shroffs* they "served as intermediaries for the joint stock banks"[5] set up by the British and helped in the conduct of government finance in far-flung areas ; as traders they served British merchant firms by procuring for them goods like opium, cotton and jute from the hinterland and by selling imports from Britain on the domestic market. The Singhanias, Lalbhais and Sarabhais belong to this category. There were others who were brokers, *banians* or contractors to the raj who supplied provisions to the British Indian army at home or abroad. The founders of the Tata house, the Wadias, Lalji Naranjis, Thackerseys, Khimjees, Morarjees, Goenkas, Kanorias, Jatias, Jalans, Bajorias and so on amassed fortunes by serving the imperialist bourgeoisie in such capacities. There was another group who were also brokers of British firms but who made their piles *mainly* as gamblers or speculators.

The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island spoke of a form of speculation "known as satto," which had "existed for more than fifty years and is still a feature of commercial life in the city. ...The business consists in the making of contracts for the sale or purchase of any commodity or produce or manufactured article or stocks and shares at a specified rate deliverable at a specified future time, the seller or buyer, as the case may be, trusting to his own calculation or forecast of the market rate on such specified date. The transaction is as a rule not followed by the actual delivery of goods...and the transaction degenerates into simple gambling on the differences in rates..."[6] In Bombay, many Marwari, Gujarati, Hindu, Parsi and Muslim businessmen used to gamble on the prices of opium, cotton, oil seeds, wheat, gold and silver, Government promissory notes, shares of joint stock companies, etc.[7]

The futures markets in opium, specie and, later, hessian and raw jute were started in Calcutta by Marwaris, and leading Marwari speculators appeared before the turn of the century.[8] The stock market became the second major speculative market.[9] Speaking of the Calcutta Stock Exchange, P. Lovett says: "...the boom years during and just after the [First World] War brought in a large number of that community [Marwari]...They have undoubtedly entirely changed the atmosphere of the Stock Exchange and in place of genuine stock-broking business they have introduced a very strong element of personal gambling. Many of these new members are speculators pure and simple..."[10]

The First World War, like the Second, offered magnificent opportunities for speculation. As Timberg says, during the war, "Marwaris were able to reap the rewards of speculation on all these markets"—in jute, jute manufactures, jute mill shares, imported cement and refined sugar, grain, cotton and specie.[11] It has been said that wealth 'literally' began to shower on

Barabazar (Marwari-dominated market in Calcutta)."[12] The Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the stronghold of British expatriate capital, felt greatly concerned at "the extensive gambling in wheat, seeds, cotton and jute that was going on in Barabazar to the detriment of 'legitimate business'.[13] Among the princes of gamblers or speculators who afterwards became leading industrialists were the Birlas, Bangurs, Dalmias, Surajmull Nagarmulls, Kesoram Poddars, Hukumchands and Chamarias.[14]

It is the huge speculative profits that enabled Birla, Anandilal Poddar of Bombay, Jamnalal Bajaj, Surajmull Nagarmull, Kesoram Poddar and others to enter industry.[15] "The successful industrialists of the 'first wave', the immediate post-World War I period", writes Timberg, "were almost exclusively from firms prominent as speculators rather than as *banians* to British firms, or as firms with extensive upcountry nets of the traditional sort."[16]

The founders of the Birla house, one of the two leading business houses of India today, had a remarkable skill in gambling or speculation and made piles of money by means of it. Besides G. D. Birla's grandfather Sheonarayan, his father Baldeodas and his elder brother Jugal Kishore, "showed such maturity in speculation that the Birla family came to be classed with the Chamarias", the leading speculators of Calcutta. The Birlas were such inveterate gamblers that B. M. Birla, G. D. Birla's youngest brother, was said to have won one and a half lakh of rupees through gambling on the evening of his own wedding reception. During the First World War, the Birla assets were estimated to have increased fourfold and they became multi-millionaires.[17]

Interestingly, in a letter to G. D. Birla, dated 16 December 1930, Gandhi advised him and his brothers to refrain from such gambling but added: "However do only what is intelligently acceptable and within your power."[18] It shows that even by the end of 1930, the Birlas, who were then among the leading Indian business magnates, had not ceased gambling, which was to them a valuable means of enrichment.

So the Indian big bourgeoisie's sources of primary accumulation of capital were their earnings as brokers and *banians*, as *shroffs*, or as gamblers and speculators. All of them were gamblers and speculators but some were primarily so. Eminent gamblers and speculators like the Petits, Birlas and Bangurs were also brokers serving British patrons. G. D. Birla, who contributed most to the building of the Birla empire, had begun his life as a broker to British firms. It was Englishmen, who, as Birla himself said, were his "patrons and clients."[19]

The national bourgeois in India, on the other hand, belonged to altogether different classes or strata of society. They were neither brokers and *banians* to British firms, nor *shroffs* with a wide network of branches serving as intermediaries of British joint stock banks and merchants and managing government finance, nor gamblers and speculators. Some of them were educated petty bourgeois elements—scientists, technicians, etc.—and some were skilled workers or *mistries*. Second, the source of their initial capital was their own earnings or the earnings of their relatives and friends. So, the beginning was alwsys very modest. They always started with small capital and, gradually, through hard struggle, established themselves to some extent. The compradors, on the other hand,—a Tata, Petit, Wadia, Morarji Gocuidas, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Birla, Goenka or Dalmia—set up big units on the model of those operating in the metropolis or founded by expatriate capital here.

Third, the national bourgeois knew the techniques of production; they not only had masrery over the production processes but often innovated products and machinery. On the other hand, not only was the comprador big bourgeoisie blissfully ignorant of the production techniques but it felt no interest in them. Their mills and factories were designed and erected with all machinery supplied by foreign companies and commissioned and run by foreign engineers, technicians and managers. The *banias* were financial wizards but had neither any aptitude for innovation nor any interest in the process of production nor were they distinguished for a bold and adventurous spirit. As Amiya Kumar Bagchi observes, it is "management of finance and ability to take advantage of opportunities for cornering the market in key articles of trade and for earning speculative profits" that contribute to their business success.[20]

Some National Bourgeois Enterprises

The national bourgeois who were genuine entrepreneurs were those who founded Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, Alembic Chemicals, Bengal Immunity, Mohini Mohan Cotton Mills, Shri Annapurna Cotton Mills, East India Pharmaceutical Works Calcutta Chemical Company, Calcutta Fan Works, Scientific and Industrial Glass Co. Ltd., Krishna Silicate and Glass Works. Bharat Battery Manufacturing Company, Bengal Waterproof, Bharat Jute Mills and India Machinery Company and many other enterprises of this kind in different parts of India. Here we may mention a few facts to underline the basic differences between them and the comprador big bourgeois.

Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, the pioneer chemical and pharmaceutical firm in the Indian sub-continent, was set up on a very modest scale in 1892 by P. C. Roy, an eminent scientist, professor of Chemistry in the University of Calcutta and true nationalist. The growth was slow but steady. It had its own research laboratory, developed many vital drugs and produced them from basic stages without any foreign help and mainly with indigenous raw materials. It revived the use also of some potent indigenous drugs. It had an engineering department to manufacture necessary machinery and equipment. Its policy was one of learning and innovating while doing. Its founder wanted it to be an "institution where the genius of the young men of the country could find full play for creation and organization." Its objective was not merely to make profits but to harness science and technology for productive purposes and to attain self-reliance.[21]

Bengal Immunity was founded by eminent doctors who set up a small laboratory in a small room in 1919. Captain Narendranath Dutt, who had worked as an ordinary labourer in fields and factories during his student days and joined the Indian Medical Service during World War I, took charge of the company in 1925 when it faced an acute crisis. It set up several factories and a big well-equipped research laboratory. Dispensing with imported intermediate goods, it produced fine chemicals from indigenous basic raw materials and manufactured machinery and components in its own workshop.[22]

Calcutta Chemicals had also an humble beginning in 1916. Its three founders—Rajendra Nath Sen, Birendra Nath Maitra and Khagendra Chandra Dasgupta—were distinguished students of science and teachers at the Bengal Engineering College, Shibpur. Dasgupta took part in the Swadeshi movement. He was sent by the "Society for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education for Indians", Calcutta, first to Japan and then to the U.S.A. for higher studies. He obtained B.Sc. from Stanford University and worked as a chemist in a large factory in the U.S.A. for some time. On his return he became a professor of Chemistry at the Shibpur B. E. College. He was arrested in 1914 for trying to help the patriots of the Komagatamaru.[23]

East India Pharmaceutical Works was set up in 1936 with only five or six workers. The founder of the company, Ashok Sen, had been doing research in the Calcutta University Science College before he joined Bengal Immunity. Like him two other chemists left Bengal Immunity to set up East India harmaceuticals. Hiren Dutt Gupta, who soon joined East India and afterwards became its managing director, had been a member of the Jugantar Party, a petty bourgeois revolutionary organization which believed in the armed overthrow of the raj and was imprisoned in 1931. At the end of his four-year term of imprisonment, he was interned as a detenu until 1938. A fellow-detenu for seven years had been Jyotirmay Sengupta, who too joined East India. Refusing to depend on foreign technology, it has built up its own research laboratories equipped with modern scientific instruments. And most of the mechanical instruments used in its factories have been designed and manufactured by its own engineering division.[24]

Nani Gopal Sarkar, one of the two promoters of Scientific and Industrial Glass Company, the first company set up in India to manufacture scientific glass, learnt the process of manufacturing industrial glass in this country, in Germany and different other places. Ranajit Roy, the other promoter, had obtained tripos in natural sciences from the Cambridge University. Among others who helped the enterprise was Amulya Biswas, whowas endowed with a scientific talent and manufactured many complicated scientific equipments in his machine-shop in Calcutta.[25]

The founder of Krishna Silicate and Glass Works Ltd., Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar, when quite young, was imprisoned for political reasons in Burma from 1933 to 1936. On his release he had a brilliant academic career and obtained his master's degree in Applied Physics. Helped with a plot of land and small initial capital by a sympathetic person, he set up a factory in 1943 with only twenty workers. The automatic machine that was installed at its Baruipur unit was imported from the U.S.A. but smaller machines were manufactured in the company's machine-shop.[26]

Bengal Waterproof Works was the first firm in India to manufacture waterproof. It is still the leader in the field of rubber-based waterproof and protective footwear. Its founder, Surendra Mohan Basu, obtained a scholarship and left for Japan to learn dyeing and calico printing. From there he went to the U.S.A., graduated in Industrial Chemistry from the Stanford University, obtained his M. Sc. degree from the University of California and worked for some time in the International Harvester Company. In September 1914, on his return to India, he was arrested for his contacts with the Ghadr Party. Again, after some time, he was arrested under the Defence of India Act and interned in Hamirpur in the U. P. He had contacts with Indian revolutionary exiles like Madame Cama, Sardar Ajit Singh and Dr. Shyamaji Krishnavarma. While under internment in Hamirpur during World War I, he equipped a small laboratory and carried on research to manufacture waterproof cloth and canvas through chemical proofing. Released sometime after the end of the War, he set up in 1920 with the help of his brothers Bengal Waterproof Works in their rented house.[27]

Alembic Chemicals, first set up in Bombay in 1903 and re-established in Baroda in 1907, which had also a modest beginning, is today the largest indigenous pharmaceutical firm in India. B. D. Amin, one of the three founders of Alembic, was a *Patidar* not a *bania*. His sons, Ramanbhai and Nanubhai Patel, educated respectively in Germany and the U. S. A. at M. I. T. and Cornell, "take great pride in the fact that the Alembic complex was developed with essentially no foreign collaboration (by contrast with some of the newer chemical/pharmaceutical houses, such as the Sarabhai firms, also in Baroda)."[28] In 1965 Alembic Chemicals used foreign technology to manufacture or improve five products, but these account for a small percentage of the total value of production.[29]

We shall not multiply such instances. We shall refer to another class of genuine entrepreneurs. According to a report of a survey undertaken by the Jadavpur University, Calcutta, under the auspices of the Reserve Bank of India, between July 1960 and April 1961, there were 1168 small engineering units in central Howrah : 707 of them employed less than 10 persons each ; 198, 10 to 19 persons ; 163, 20 to 49 persons ; 80, 50 to 200 persons ; and only 20, over 200 persons each. Most of the owners are themselves skilled *mistries* ; "they often buy machines scrapped by the large engineering concerns in Calcutta at an almost nominal price (e.g. Rs. 500 for a machine worth Rs. 30,000 as stated by one such happy buyer) and build them anew in their factories. Many of the finer accessories of such machines are done away with in the process of this re-making, and much of the accuracy also goes out of them....It is also quite usual for them to manufacture some machines in toto, copying what they call the 'mother' machine... leaving out again many of the accessories."[30] The Report states that the skilled *mistries*, who promoted these units, "started independently, with their skill as the only important asset and some make-shift arrangement for factory space and a small old lathe, often reconditioned by themselves....They use their eyes for meters and fingers for intricate machines for testing accuracy and smoothness, and do things which our engineering investigators declared to be unusually good. This, of course, is not the case with the majority of workers any more, but the percentage of skilled workers is still very high."[31] It may be noted that the overwhelming majority of these units were set up before 1947. The Report goes on to observe : "Like their European counterparts in the eighteenth century, the pioneer industrialists [of Howrah] started entirely with their own resources...The only difference with the English pioneers lay in the really small amounts which they could scrape together to make a start. We came across many firms, some now quite big, where the only resource with which they started their business was a lathe discarded by some big business firm. Their capital, in a figurative sense, was their own skill and their confidence in themselves....Like the English pioneers, most of them achieved this expansion through modest living, ploughing back their profits, and making most of the limited resources which could thus be scraped together.[32]

Referring to the history of the form of ownership, the Report points out that "there was an evolution almost following the lines of development in England, with a lag of a century, from private proprietorship to partnership and then to private limited company. But this is the point, we noted, where their history appears to have stopped somewhat abruptly."[33]

As regards quality, the products of the Howrah units, according to some big industrial concerns which are among their principal buyers, bear a good tolerance limit. Some of the small workshops are said to produce first class materials but lack tools for extra accurate work.[34]

Chief among the problems these units face are delay in receiving payment from the government for the work done, denial by the government of any quota or adequate quota for raw materials and lack of finance for buying machines.[35]

The Report strikes a pessimistic note :

"Most small owners are workers with ambition, though limited, and are men of determination, quick to learn and with much forbearance. This is how they make up the lack of finance, and, in a way, the fact that they have not secured much aid has done them good : they have learnt it the hard way. Barring a few cases of rich beginners...the way many of them have made a start makes very interesting and stimulating reading....It is difficult indeed to explain, but one has a feeling often of coming across occasionally a small man who has unmistakable, and we hope indomitable, urge for growing big as many indeed have and no doubt some others will.... There is no doubt that a few will survive almost any hazard, and will grow without any assistance, but on the whole, the odds against them make a rather depressing reading, and their lot is much worse compared even to the medium units for whom the long run prospects are not very bright either."[36]

This was what Marx called "the really revolutionizing path"[37] to capitalism—the path that P. C. Rays, Amins, Ashok Sens, Surendra Mohan Boses and the skilled owner-*mistries* of Howrah followed. But the revolutionary elements were cabined, cribbed and confined under colonial rule and under the post-colonial order when imperialist capital and its big compradors dominated and dominate. Many of them fall by the wayside, some survive somehow and a few like Alembic Chemicals, East India Pharmaceuticals and Bengal Waterproof attain a middle bourgeois status.

The path of independent development that the national bourgeoisie followed may be contrasted with the path of development pursued by the compradors. The Delhi Cloth Mills, one of India's largest industrial complexes today, was founded in 1888 by promoters, "mostly Agarwal banias who had never seen a cotton mill."[38] So an Englishman was entrusted with the task of setting it up. The Bombay and Ahmedabad millowners had followed the same practice. Wealthy comprador merchants, money-lenders and gamblers, often rolled into one, lured by the vision of more than usual profits, promoted cotton mills but these were designed, supplied, erected, commissioned, run and managed by Britishers for them. Even the building plans and instructions often came from British firms.[39]

What should be the criteria for distinguishing the political epresentative of the national bourgeoisie from that of the compradors ? The representative of the national bourgeoisie, we think, despite vacillations, had as his goal real freedom—freedom outside the orbit of imperialism—and believed in combining violent with peaceful struggle to overthrow the rule of the imperialists. Another criterion should be the kind of relationship that existed between him and the comprador bourgeoisie. Did he or did he not enjoy its trust and support ?

Collusion or Confrontation ?

The "organic links" that were forged before and after 1914 between imperialist capital and Indian big business houses have been described in Chapters 7 and 8 of *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*. We may take up here Pavlov's theory about the antagonism that grew between imperialist capital and Indian big capital during the inter-war years.

During World War I itself the raj was convinced that some guided industrialization in India was essential for political, economic and military reasons.[40] Perhaps it would not be wrong to describe Britain after World War I as a hobbled giant. As Hobsbawm writes, "At the very moment when Britain emerged on the victorious side in the first major war since Napoleon, when her chief continental rival Germany was on her knees, when the British Empire, sometimes lightly and unconvincingly disguised as 'mandates', 'protectorates' and satellite Middle Eastern states, covered a greater extent of the world map than ever before, the traditional economy of Britain not only ceased to grow, but contracted . .'Economic decline', something that economists argued about before 1914, now became a palpable fact."[41]

Till 1914, cotton textiles, coal, ship-building, steel and iron were Britain's staple industries. Even before 1914 its superiority in them, except in ship-building, was disappearing as rivals like the U. S. A., Germany, France and Belgium challenged its supremacy. In the production of steel, 'the crucial commodity of industrialization', Britain was surpassed by the U. S. A. and Germany by the early 1890s. In 1895-6 the imports of Belgian steel into India outstripped those from Britain.[42] British industries like cotton textiles lost their competitive power and relied for markets mainly on its colonies. Before the war its investments overseas rose while its domestic investments continued to fall. Unable to compete with its rivals as a 'workshop of the world', it was until World War I "the greatest commercial power" and "the greatest source of international loan capital"—the advantages it enjoyed because of its political control over a large empire. Britain, as Hobsbawm observed, "was becoming a parasitic rather than a competitive economy".[43]

During the inter-war years, "there were", to quote Alfred E. Kahn, "unprecedented harsh secular declines, radical breaks with the great continuous upward trends of the preceding century."[44] When strong winds of change were blowing through the U. S. A. and Western Europe, they grew sluggish as they reached Britain, and the economy of the first industrial power in the world began to decline because of its conservatism. Its technology was archaic; unlike its rivals like the U. S. A., it failed to adopt mass production methods; and cartels and monopolies, etc., were slow to develop here. For instance, Lancashire's decline was due to its inherent weakness—the smallness of its units, insufficient capital and out-of-date plants and methods compared to the rising industries of Japan and the U. S. A.[45] Referring to the erosion of Lancashire's competitive power, Buchanan, writing in the early thirties, observed: "...Japan, in the past 25 years, has built up an industry whose goods are now being sold in the shops of Manchester."[46]

But "the inter-war years", as Hobsbawn says, "were not entirely wasted". And by 1939 "Britain was no longer a Victorian economy. The importance of scientific technology, of mass-production methods, of industry producing for the mass market, but above all, of economic concentration, 'monopoly capitalism' and state intervention was very much greater....in 1914 Britain was perhaps the least concentrated of the great industrial economies, and in 1939 one of the most."[47] These were the years which saw the development of new growth industries and the rise of giant monopoly firms like Imperial Chemical Industries, Unilever and Guest, Keen and Nettlefold. While the old industries declined, the new growth industries like electricals, automobiles, aircraft, rayon and silk prospered from about 1924.[48]

During the war itself the hobbled British giant felt the need for some guided industrialization in India to prevent imperialist rivals from trespassing upon the Indian market. In a despatch to the Secretary of State for India on 26 November 1915, Lord

Hardinge's government wrote :

"It is becoming increasingly clear that a definite and self-conscious policy of improving the industrial capabilities of India will have to be pursued after the war, *unless she is to become more and more a dumping ground for the manufactures of foreign nations*."[49]

It was the same reason why earlier, in 1900, the Secretary of State insisted that Jamsetji Tata should build the Tata steel plant, and the Indian Government gave all help to the Tatas to see it through.[50]

In 1918 the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on India's Constitutional Reforms also stated : "There are *political* considerations peculiar to India itself. But *both on economic and military grounds imperial interests also demand that the natural resources of India should henceforth be better realized*. We cannot measure the access of strength which an industrialized India will bring to the power of the Empire ; but we are sure that it will be welcome after the war."[51]

Besides economic reasons, global strategic considerations played an important role. World War I highlighted the necessity of an industrial base in the east for the conduct of a modern war. As Clive Dewey writes, "peacetime industrial policy was conceived as preparation for the next war."[52] It may be noted that as a supply base during World War II India played a much more important role than dominions like Australia and New Zealand and other colonies.

Political considerations were hardly less important. British imperialism emerged out of the war much weaker than before. It lost the leading position in the capitalist-imperialist world to U. S. imperialism and was squeezed out of its informal Latin American empire. Besides, the emergence of the World's first socialist state in 1917 presented a threat to the imperialist system itself.

Within India there was widespread unrest among the masses. Though anger and hatred towards the raj because of intensified oppression and exploitation during the war-time smouldered within the hearts of the people, they could find only isolated and sporadic outbursts. The raj was afraid of a post-war upheaval and prepared to meet the situation by rallying Indian collaborators. The Montagu declaration of August 1917, Montagu's visit to India in 1917-8 when suppliants including Gandhi, Tilak, Motilal and Jinnah waited on him, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of July 1918 and the Government of India Act of 1919 were intended to associate the leaders of the upper classes with the colonial administration. The purpose, no doubt, was to strengthen the British raj, not to weaken it. As the Secretary of State "pointed out to the House of Commons in February 1922, such advance was conditional on Indian 'good conduct' and, in the imperial context, this included loyalty to the empire and preparedness to put the interests of the imperial power above those of India alone."[53] To strengthen their social base within the colony when World War I had created an explosive situation and when the proletarian revolution in Russia had set an example before all oppressed peoples, *the British imperialists extended some concessions to that section of the Indian bourgeoisie which was quite willing "to put the interests of the imperial power above those of India" and "to play a part in the imperialist system."* The concessions were granted in order, as Judith Brown says, "to contain growing public discontent and to attract collaborators who would form a stable foundation for their rule..."[54] In other words, the concessions were intended "to construct a framework in which *Indian politics could develop in a manner that would strengthen, rather than weaken, the raj.*"[55]

The British imperialists expected that if Indian resources were developed by British capital with Indian capital playing a subordinate role, this would prevent imperialist poachers from trespassing on Britain's Indian preserves and benefit British capital. Till then, "the traditional British aim of developing India as a market for British manufactured goods in return for India's food and raw materials was achieved by the combination of an active state policy in the fields of transport, communication and irrigation development with a passive state policy in the name of *laissez faire* with respect to industrial development."[56] This policy was proposed to be somewhat modified in the new conditions that had arisen. *Guided development, judicious 'economic safeguards' for British capital and adoption of 'imperial preference' in matters of tariff were expected to help, not harm, the interests of British capital.*

Surveying the prospects for British capital in India soon after the war, Thomas Ainscough, the then senior U. K. Trade Commissioner, observed :

> "*A new era is dawning for India*—the era of industrial expansion, during which the great Dependency will gradually take her place as an important manufacturing country and *a valuable industrial asset to the Empire.*"[57]

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, an eminent Congress and Hindu Mahasabha leader, good friend of the princes, the Birlas and other big bourgeois and member of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-18, hailed the new "dawn" and declared :

> "The hope of Indians for the industrial development of their country has been further strengthened by the knowledge that, like their noble predecessors in office, the present Viceroy and the Secretary of State are also convinced of the necessity of a liberal policy being adopted in respect of Indian industrial development."[58]

The Indian Fiscal Commission 1921-2, of which Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola was president and G. D. Birla and Narottam Morarjee were among the members, emphasized the need for foreign capital and stated that it was to the foreign capitalist "that we must look largely at first for the introduction of new industries and for instruction in the economics of mass production."[59]

While upholding the above view in their "Minute of Dissent", Birla, Morarjee, Rahimtoola and two other members said that they "would raise no objection to foreign capital in India obtaining the benefit of the protective policy provided suitable conditions are laid down to safeguard the essential interests of India....It is because we desire that industrialization should proceed very rapidly that we are prepared to accept the advent of foreign capital to accelerate the pace."[60] They added : "It is a mere commonplace to say that a rich India is a tower of strength to the Empire, while an economically weak India is a source of weakness."[61]

At the second annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, held in Calcutta in December 1928 and inaugurated by Viceroy Lord Irwin, Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, the outstanding leader of the Indian big bourgeoisie, who was presiding, "pleaded for co-operation between Indian and British commercial interests, and with his characteristic foresight, stated that 'Englishmen in India understand that Indian leaders have no predatory intentions and that in a self-governing India, British interests will be as secure as at the present day'."[62]

The third annual session of the Federation held in February 1930 under the presidentship of G. D. Birla was also inaugurated by Lord Irwin. Birla, too, fervently pleaded for co-operation between British and Indian capital. He said : "A prosperous India alone can redeem her debt (sic !). They [the British capitalists] owe it as much to themselves as to this country, to strive in co-operation with Indians for a new order of things."[63] Significantly, Birla sought to build his "new order", not by fighting and ousting imperialist capital but by colluding with it.

Another significant indication of the way in which the wind was blowing was provided by the report of the Motilal Nehru Committee, which had been appointed by the 'All Parties Conference' to draft a 'Swaraj' Constitution for India in 1928. The report said :

"As regards European commerce we cannot see why men who have put great sums of money into India should at all be nervous. It is inconceivable that there can be any discriminating legislation against any community doing business lawfully in India."

The report went on to add :

"If, however, there are any special interests of European commerce which require special treatment in future, it is only fair that in regard to the protection of those interests, Europeans should formulate their proposals and we have no doubt that they will receive proper consideration from those who are anxious for a peaceful solution of the political problem."[64]

Contrary to what Pavlov and other Soviet writers have asserted, the Indian big bourgeoisie was not seeking confrontation with imperialist capital in the twenties and thirties but collaboration with it. The positive recommendations of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-8, the Fiscal Autonomy Convention, the appointment of the Indian Fiscal Commission 1921-2, the appointment of the Tariff Boards, the grant of protection and subsidies to certain industries such as cotton, iron and steel, paper, matches, heavy chemicals and sugar roused great expectations in the minds of the big bourgeois. While the excise duty on Indian cotton textiles, a subject for much grievance of the Indian and British cotton millowners in India, was removed in 1925, increasing doses of import duty were imposed on Lancashire and Japanese cloth, especially Japanese cotton textiles, to protect Indian textiles. The imposition of protective duties on paper and sugar, especially on sugar from 1 January 1932, thrilled the hearts of the big bourgeoisie. Birla Dalmia, Singhania, Thapar, Shri Ram, Surajmull-Nagarmull and other big capitalists each set up several sugar refineries. When, in 1931-2, there were 32 sugar factories in India, producing 158,600 tons of sugar, their number rose to 130 and the output to 578,100 tons.[65] In 1934 Walchand Hirachand observed that 95 per cent of the new sugar factories were owned and managed by Indians and that Rs 200 million were invested in this industry.[66] As George Schuster, then Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, said, the sugar industry earned a profit of 400 per cent in 1933.[67]

It may be noted that towards the end of 1929, Indians were admitted to the Baltic Exchange and other commercial bodies in London through the influence of Viceroy Irwin—a step which Thakurdas hailed as "a step in the right direction of bringing the two countries together in matters commercial and political."[68] These concessions benefited several Indian business magnates, chief among whom were the Birlas and Scindias.[69]

Both European expatriate capital and Indian big capital were seeking co-operation with each other—not conflict. While opposing discrimination against British capital, a letter dated 27 July 1929, circulated by the Secretary of the British-dominated Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and Ceylon, assured Indian business magnates that the organization of British expatriate capital was not "unsympathetic to Indian economic aspirations", and stated :

"This Association does not believe that Indian and British interests are irreconcilable ; on the contrary, it holds that the trade and prosperity of the two countries are and must be interdependent "[70]

A reply to this circular, drafted by G. D. Birla on behalf of the FICCI, while claiming India's right to discriminate against foreign interests, appealed "to every right-thinking Englishman to judge the situation calmly and decide for himself whether a prosperous, self-governing, contented and friendly India is a more valuable asset to the Empire ... *We agree that Indian and British interests are not irreconcilable and there is enough room for both the communities to work in close co-operation....*"

The reply approvingly cited the first of the two passages that we have quoted from the report of the Motilal Nehru Committee, assuring British capital that there would be no discrimination against it in a Swaraj India.[71]

In a letter, dated 7 June 1929, to N. M. Mazumdar of Tata Ltd., London, written for the benefit of Sir Dorab Tata, Thakurdas also mentioned "*the great scope for co-operation between Indian and European merchants and industrialists.*"[72]

Between 1920 and 1938 India's industrial production more than doubled.[73] Both foreign and Indian capital contributed to this growth. Private foreign sterling capital and private foreign rupee capital that were invested in India between 1921 and 1938 amounted to £ 33.934 million and Rs. 220.5 million respectively, of which British investors provided £ 21.285 million and Rs. 159·7 million, a total of Rs. 343.4 million worth of new investment.[74]

V. I. Pavlov has observed : "The discrepancy between the accumulation of money capital and its productive utilization grew during the war and as a result of the war. It was, in our opinion, the principal economic reason for the sharpening contradiction between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism in the post-war [i. e., post-World War I] years"[75]. Soviet scholars writing on India seem to have one purpose—to produce stuff that would defend Soviet foreign policy. Otherwise, a statement of this type, which has hardly any relation to facts, could not be made. During and for some years after the war, Indian cotton textile industry and the iron and steel industry, the only two industries in which large amounts of Indian capital were invested, made fabulous profits. Big brokers and speculators, too, made undreamt of profits during the war. Speaking of trade in raw jute, for instance, Omkar Goswami writes that traders manipulated things in such a way that the price of raw jute was permanently depressed and they "did very well for themselves by simultaneously maximising the trade and *fatka* profits."[76] And after the war, the war profits and official policies led to the expansion of the cotton and iron and steel industries, the involvement of Indian big capital in jute, paper, cement, sugar and a few other industries, and the emergence of new groups of the Indian big bourgeoisie—the Birlas, Singhanias, Sri Rams, Goenkas, Dalmia Jains, Surajmull-Nagarmulls, Ruias, Poddars, Thapars, Walchands, Chettiyars, Naidus, etc. A big chunk of Indian big capital was invested also in companies controlled by European managing agencies. As we have seen, G. D. Birla, Narottam Morarjee and others, as members of the Indian Fiscal Commission 1921-2, were not opposing but inviting fresh foreign capital. *Collusion between the two to fleece the people was the primary aspect ; whatever contradiction was there over tariff, the sterling-rupee ratio, imperial preference, etc., was secondary.*

The fact is, the Indian business magnates were eager to exploit the profitable opportunities that had opened out before them after World War I and were opening out, especially in the early thirties. The positive aspects of the government's commercial and fiscal policies—positive from their point of view—as Claude Marcovits notes, "tended to overshadow the negative aspects of the currency restriction and financial stringency".[77] The Indian big bourgeoisie wanted to wax fatter within the orbit of imperialism, not outside it. They found ample scope for co-operation with imperialist capital, despite some conflicts on the issues like the sterling-rupee ratio. Above all, they wanted peace to rake in profits that were quite alluring. For instance, Sir Shri Ram's Delhi Cloth Mills paid a total annual dividend of 135 per cent in 1930-31.[78] They were not so stupid as to risk their business empires in a confrontation with the raj.

It would be wrong to assume, as some people do, that the formation of the FICCI was an indication of antagonism between imperialist and Indian big capital. Foreign expatriate capital had its powerful all-India organization in the Associated Chambers of Commerce. It was not surprising that representatives of the Indian big bourgeoisie like Thakurdas and G. D. Birla took the initiative in founding the FICCI in 1927 to represent its interests. But it sought not a confrontation with British capital but its own "salvation" by "coming to some understanding" with it. While inaugurating the second annual meeting of the FICCI Viceroy Irwin welcomed its formation. Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council attended this meeting as well as two subsequent annual meetings and took part in the discussions.[78a] Birla feared that in the absence of "the Government members" the FICCI "show is going to be a tame one."[78b]

During the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931, the representatives of the FICCI—Purshotamdas Thakurdas, G.D. Birla and Jamal Mohamed—like Gandhi, the sole representative of the Congress at the Conference, were willing to agree to "safeguards" to protect the interests of British capital in India.[79]

It was about this time—the depression years—that G.D. Birla told Edward Benthall, the senior partner of Bird-Heilgers, a Calcutta-based leading British managing agency, who represented British expatriate capital at the second Round Table Conference, "that, henceforward, he desired to work in collaboration and to drop all his hostility."[80]

"According to Benthall", writes Marcovits, "he [Birla] even appeared ready to guarantee non-discrimination in the future against British business interests in India..."[81]

It was during the early thirties that those British business magnates "who had for a long time recognized the virtues of co-operation between British and Indian interests now felt, in Benthall's words, that the 'time is ripe---because there is at the present moment a bond of unity between the two in their joint opposition to Japan'."[82] The Federation of British Industries emphasized "the increased importance of Empire for the British economy and prescribed imperial economic co-operation as the only possible way out for the crisis-ridden and increasingly non-competitive British economy".[83]

The opposition by a section of the Indian bourgeoisie to the Ottawa Agreement of 1932 and the Indo-British agreements of 1935 and 1939, which extended preference to a number of empire goods, especially British manufactures in return for preference to India's raw material exports, is sometimes highlighted as a shining example of the Indian bourgeoisie's antagonism towards imperialist capital. This imposition of Imperial Preference was designed to tie the British colonies and dominions closer to Britain and to perpetuate the same old colonial economy relationship. "But", as B. Chatterji writes, "denunciation did not mean the end of the principle of economic co-operation. Among the Indian commercial classes, as the Viceroy gloomily observed, there was a conviction that if India denounced the agreement, the U.K. would, for political as well as economic reasons, hurry forward with offers of an agreement much more favourable to India."[84] The opposition was intended not to change the colonial economic relationship but to obtain some concessions.

On 14 March 1932, before the Ottawa Conference, G.D. Birla wrote to the Secretary of State:

"With reference to the Ottawa Conference, if it is your desire that Indian trade and commerce should be represented at the Conference,--Sir Purshotamdas would be delighted to accept the invitation when it is extended to him. I am writing this with his full consent. The Committee of the Federation will not be averse to this proposition. *We realize the importance of this Conference and you may rely on our support in the right direction.*"[85]

The tariff protection and subsidies to industries in India, offered during the twenties and thirties, were intended to shut out not British goods so much as other foreign goods. At the 1930 Imperial Economic Conference Geoffrey Corbett, the Commerce Member of the Government of India, pointed out ;

"I have already explained that it is foreign goods that are replacing British goods in the Indian market. It follows that it is frequently against foreign goods that Indian industries require protection. In some lines there is really no competition at all between British goods and Indian goods."[86]

Many political scientists and historians are apt to exaggerate the contradiction between imperialist and Indian big capital. They seem to ignore what D.R. Gadgil noted : "Many modern industries in the country have become established behind tariff walls. The iron and steel and the sugar industries owe their development entirely to protection granted for long periods. Old, established industries like cotton manufactures have had to seek, and have obtained, protection against Japanese competition."[87] Writing in 1947, Gadgil referred to the Indian business magnates as "the reactionary elements represented primarily by the financial interests which have grown during the last twenty-five years to heights of wealth and political influence undreamt of before in the history of Indian society."[88]

The Indian big bourgeoisie avidly welcomed the concessions the raj offered during the inter-war years, and it is not antagonism but its fidelity to the raj and close co-operation with imperialist capital that raised it "to heights of wealth and political influence undreamt of before."

Interestingly, Sir James Grigg, Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, noted with regret early in 1939 that the policy of expatriate British capitalists "is now frankly that of making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness e.g. Birla and Benthall hunt together for quick profits."[89]

G.D. Birla's letter of 19 January 1935 to Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India, is illuminating.

"I am not at all frightened", he wrote, "of the safeguards... whatever be the safeguards, they would not hinder the progress if there was genuine sympathy and goodwill behind them." He concluded the letter with the characteristic observation that *the two countries—England and India—"by destiny are bound together."*[90]

When the second Round Table Conference failed and when the Civil Disobedience Movement entered its second phase and widespread repression was let loose, G. D. Birla assured the Secretary of State :

"The best service I can render to my own country as well as to the cause of co-operation [between India and Britain] is to persuade the Federation [FICCI] to officially offer its co-operation. ...I shall discuss there [in Calcutta] with Mr Benthall and some others the question of closer co-operation between the two communities interested in trade and commerce."[91]

In his letter of 14 March 1932 to Sir Samuel Hoare, Birla placed his "humble services" at the disposal of the Secretary of State and assured him : "...you will find us always ready to work for the economic interest, *leaving aside sentiment and politics.*"[92]

Birla was all the time harping on the necessity of "a friendly and permanent settlement". He wrote to Sir Walter Layton on 20 May 1932 :

"In fact if I would be dealing entirely with business men I should not find any difficulty in convincing them that *the interest of India as well as of Great Britain lay in a friendly and permanent settlement.* .. I am writing this as an Indian who has got a large stake in the country and who wants to see permanent peace between the two countries established."[93]

G.D. Birla has been acclaimed by Bipan Chandra and many others as the most radical of the Indian bourgeois. Chandra has called him "the brilliant political leader and mentor of the Indian capitalist class, whose political acumen often bordered on that of a genius."[94] What was the political aspiration of this "mentor of the Indian capitalist class" ? On 28 May 1932 he wrote to Professor J. M. Keynes that India—the Birlas' India—"wants nothing more than a privilege to have, in the words of Sapru, a decent place in the household of King George the Fifth",[95] which may be paraphrased as self-government under the aegis of imperialism. This was, indeed, the political aspiration of the entire Indian big bourgeoisie.

Birla held that "Sensible Indian men and women realize their need of British friendship: they want British friendship."[96] He wanted an alliance between the raj and the Gandhi wing of the Congress to crush the left wing.[97] On 30 June 1935, he told Sir Henry Craik, Home Member, Government of India, that if there was no settlement that might "bring the Government and the people closer to each other" during Gandhi's life-time, "A revolution of the bloody type may become an inevitable factor. And this would be the greatest calamity not only to India but also to England. Tories may say this would be India's funeral. I say it would be a funeral for both."[98] The destinies of Tory England and the 'nationalist' Birla's India were wedded together: they would either hang together or hang separately. Naturally, he hated even civil disobedience and felt horror at the mere talk of it.[99] He was opposed to all kinds of direct action and tried his best to see that "the energies of India" were directed "once for all towards constitutional channels."[100]

To G.D. Birla, British imperialism did not stand in the way of India's progress: the real obstacle was Hindu-Muslim disunity. That is why, long before the Muslim League demanded the partition of India, he had pleaded for it—a fact historians are not aware of or ignore. In his letter dated 11 January 1938 to Gandhi's devoted secretary, Mahadev Desai, he wrote:

"I wonder why it should not be possible to have two Federations, one of Muslims and another of Hindus.... I fear if anything is going to check our progress, it is the Hindu-Muslim question—not the Englishman but our own internal quarrels."[101]

Birla, "the brilliant leader and mentor of the Indian capitalist class", was not only a commercial broker but a broker in the sphere of politics. As he himself put it, "I sought to prevent the growing distrust which the British in India entertained of Gandhiji's high motives and the passionate distrust which Indians felt in regard not merely to the English in India but towards British statesmen and the British Parliament."[102] And in his letter of 3 July 1937 to C.

Rajagopalachari, Birla confessed : "Whilst at times I feel disappointed, I also feel that I am amply compensated in having to defend Englishmen before Bapu [i.e., Gandhi], and Bapu before Englishmen. It is a very interesting task. I would have no heart to do it, but the more I discuss Bapu with Englishmen and *vice versa*, the more I believe that it is a tragedy that these two big forces in the world cannot combine. I think it will be a service to the world when they do."[103]

Birla was quite indignant when, towards the end of 1940, Viceroy Linlithgow did not sufficiently trust him. He said to the Viceroy's Private Secretary that "no man among Indians has worked harder to help him [the Viceroy] or stood more loyally by him than myself." Communicating all this to Gandhi's secretary, Birla wrote : "You know how I have defended the Viceroy before Bapu and how I have acted as if I was the Viceroy's representative."[104]

G.D. Birla's biographer, Ram Niwas Jaju, writes that both the raj and the Congress "considered G. D. [Birla] a bridge between the two."[105]

Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, another brilliant leader of the Indian capitalist class, who together with Birla founded the FICCI, realized that "*the salvation to India lies in coming to some understanding with British commerce.*"[106] In an interview in London in July 1933, Thakurdas denied that there was "any incompatibility of interest between England and India."[107] Again, at a meeting of the Indian Cotton Enquiry Committee, Manchester, in June 1933, he said that there was every chance of co-operation between the Lancashire producer and the Indian producer and "that there should be the closest co-operation." He expressed his willingness to do all he could to strengthen the relationship between India and Lancashire.[108]

R.J. Moore has rightly observed that Thakurdas represented the disposition of the commercial collaborators with the raj faithfully and "*occupied a strategic position as an intermediary between the Congress and the government.*"[109]

Though Thakurdas did not support many of the policies of the Congress leadership, he enjoyed the trust of Gandhi and his chief lieutenants.[110] During the Civil Disobedience Movement, when the top leaders of the Congress were behind prison bars, Congress workers of Bombay vehemently denounced Thakurdas, G.D. Birla and men of their ilk for their anti-national activities. The Emergency Council of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee branded G.D. Birla, Thakurdas and Thakurdas's friends as traitors.[111] Congress workers also held demonstrations in front of Thakurdas's palatial residence in Bombay. When the news reached Vallabhbhai Patel in prison, Patel was quite upset He remarked that Thakurdas was "*more our man than anyone else's*" and sent instructions to withdraw the Congress pickets.[112]

Thakurdas's relations with the raj also were quite close. Offering a toast to Lord Irwin on behalf of the Orient Club, Bombay, in January 1930, Thakurdas said :

"...the combination of Lord Irwin as Viceroy and Mr Wedgwood Benn as Secretary of State appears at the moment to be most fortunate. ... It is indeed a tragedy that with such high hopes appearing on the horizon, the National Congress at Lahore should at this moment have taken the decision it has [to start the civil disobedience movement].... I have no doubt that with the increasing support which the Round Table Conference scheme is getting from the other sections of Indian political thought other than the Congress], we need not be pessimistic. ... I am convinced that the Congress made a great mistake in taking the decision that they did at Lahore."[113]

When the Civil Disobedience Movement had started and it had "caught on", as Thakurdas found, he worked hard for a compromise and withdrawal of the movement for all time. He wrote to the Viceroy :

"..I still consider and pray that wiser counsels may prevail and *England may still be able to retain a contented India.*"[114]

A few days later he wrote again to Irwin :

"My efforts and the efforts of my Chamber are, and will always be, in the direction of inducing Mr Gandhi to abandon his movement, but you can... realize that Mr Gandhi cannot now abandon the movement without some agreement regarding the future constitution. ... We wish to press our view on Mr Gandhi with all emphasis and do not apprehend failure. It is for your Excellency to strengthen our hands and to enable us to press our plan on Mr Gandhi."[115]

Thakurdas suggested to Schuster, then Finance Member of the Government of India, that it was possible to arrive at a compromise with Gandhi and bring about an end to the Civil Disobedience Movement. He stated :

"If something can be arranged in this matter through an intermediary I think it may be feasible to bring pressure to bear upon Mr Gandhi to call off the Civil Disobedience Movement.···*Mr Gandhi's agitation is bad, but it may prove to be better than more vicious agitation to follow should Government hold out unduly.*"[116]

Writing to Graham Pole, Thakurdas said that he was "free to admit that Mahatma Gandhi was not justified in starting the agitation which he did," but as "the agitation" had "caught on", statesmanship required "that means should be found to reassure the people and *to conciliate men like Mahatma Gandhi, men who really do not want severance of the British connection.*"[117]

During the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Thakurdas wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India :

"*After all, it looks as if in substance the difference between the Government and Gandhiji is not fundamental.*···The youth of India are getting impatient. Gandhiji has begun to lose his hold over them, and it is felt in many quarters that it will not be long before he loses his hold entirely over them. The defeat of Gandhism must mean, it is felt in many responsible circles, the revival of terrorism.[118] The best men in India dread it. To many therefore it seems as if the Government are unconsciously working hand in hand with the terrorists in defeating Gandhism."[119]

Earlier, when he met the Secretary of State in London, he "told him very plainly as to how any reforms without Gandhiji's blessings would be worse than useless."[120]

It is worth noting that, like Birla,[121] Thakurdas made a distinction between Gandhi (and his chief lieutenants) and the Congress as an organization.

It is obvious that Thakurdas could play the role of a friend both of Gandhi and the raj—the role of an intermediary between them—

only because, as Thakurdas put it, "in substance the difference between the Government and Gandhiji is not fundamental." The real enemy dreaded by both was the genuine anti-imperialist struggle.

Tactical Differences

During the inter-war years, the Indian big bourgeoisie, apart from the Muslim bourgeois, was divided into three groups so far as their political tactics were concerned. First, there was the group of Bombay's millowners headed by the Tatas. To this group belonged, among others, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir Pheroze Sethna, Sir Homi Mody and F.E. Dinshaw. These business magnates always wanted to keep on the right side of the government and shunned even any seeming opposition to it. They felt they would gain little and lose much by treading such a path. This does not mean that they were fully satisfied with what they had. As Homi Mody's biographer D. R. Mankekar writes Mody expressed his gratitude to the Secretary of State for India for the Government of India Act of 1919 and was at the same time "dissatisfied with the quantum of fiscal autonomy" offered by this Act.[132] They wanted tariff protection, the removal of the countervailing excise duty on cotton cloth, a change in the sterling-rupee ratio and so on. But they relied on friendly negotiations and gentle persuasion to achieve their ends. They were very much opposed to non-co-operation and civil disobedience and organized opposition to these movements.

These business magnates had the closest relations with foreign capital and with the raj. Some members of this group served as members of the Viceroy's Executive Council or the Bombay Governor's Executive Council. Apprehending that the Congress might take to the path of opposition to the raj, these businessmen joined hands with British capitalists in 1929 to organize a political party. During the Civil Disobedience Movement Mody and the others were opposed to any discrimination against European millowners. Invited by the government, Mody, Cowasji Jehangir and Pheroze Sethna attended the first Round Table Conference in London in 1930, which was boycotted by the Congress. The FICCI also had asked its member-bodies not to nominate any representative unless Gandhi attended the conference. In 1933 Mody signed the Mody-Lees Pact, which gave some tariff concessions to Lancashire textiles—an agreement which was condemned by the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay (then led by Manu Subedar, a small industrialist, and his group) and Ahmedabad millowners like Kasturbhai Lalbhai.

With the outbreak of World War II, Mody threw his whole weight on the side of the government. He was appointed vice-president of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1941 and together with M.S. Aney and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, two other members of the Council, lent his full support to the decisions to adopt the harshest measures to suppress the 'Quit India' movement. Mody became an acting governor of Bombay for a short while in 1946.

Significantly, Mody, who, according to his biographer, was the raj's "blue-eyed boy", and other business magnates like him, had quite friendly links with top Congress leaders like Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. When Motilal went to Bombay, he would stay with R.D. Tata. F.E. Dinshaw was the main fund-raiser for the Swaraj Party led by him.[123]

After the transfer of power, the Congress leaders honoured Mody as best as they could. They had him elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1948 and then made him governor of Uttar Pradesh.

The second group included, among others, Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Lala Sir Shri Ram. Thakurdas was no less close to foreign capital and the raj than the Modys. He also preferred the constitutional path and was on the side of the raj when the Congress launched the Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movements. He had strongly opposed the Congress decision to start the Civil Disobedience Movement.[124] He proposed to Sir T.B Sapru that "all interests other than the Congress interests [should] get together and stand together" to defeat the Civil Disobedience Movement proposed by the Congress.[125] When it started, he seemed to share the view expressed by Lalji Naranji : "Mahatma Gandhi's movement has diverted the people from adopting violent methods to his non-violent methods." Naranji wanted to tell the British government that they should give them a constitution which would offer the mercantile community "real control of the purse of the country." He wrote : "we can also tell politicians including Mahatma Gandhi that it is undesirable to create a feeling of disregard for any authority of the Government."[126]

So when the movement acquired strength, Thakurdas pleaded with the raj to conciliate Gandhi with whom, he realized, the raj had no fundamental difference

On the other hand, he was opposed to the formation of a political party which Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola and other Bombay millowners set up jointly with European expatriate capitalists with the support of Sir Dorab Tata and F.E. Dinshaw. Though he held that "there is great scope for co-operation between Indian and European merchants and industrialists" and though he got on "excellently with the European in commerce and industry", he was of the view that "Indian commerce and industry are only an integral phase of Indian nationalism, and that deprived of its inspiration in Indian nationalism Indian commerce and industry stand reduced to mere exploitation...."[127]

This letter is quite significant. On the one hand, the comprador *par excellence* longed for "co-operation" with imperialist capital to further his interests ; on the other, he sought the support of those who would be able to mobilize the masses to save him from "exploitation" by imperialist capital and to provide him with some bargaining strength. So the formation of a political party jointly with British capitalists appeared to him to be an unwise step as it would deprive him of the much-needed support of the indigenous forces. It would mean only co-operation and no pressure.

The third group, which included Birla, the Ahmedabad millowners like Ambalal Sarabhai, and Jamnalal Bajaj, was closest to Gandhi. Some of them like G.D. Birla were the shrewdest of all. This group, too, feared mass action like the plague, but it appreciated the usefulness of some controlled mass action that would kill two birds with one stone. Such controlled mass action at rare times, though it had its risks, would serve a dual purpose ; it would forestall or disrupt genuine anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggle and at the same time exert pressure on the raj to yield some concessions.

As we have noted, Birla hated civil disobedience ; like Lalji Naranji, whom we have already quoted, he heartily disliked anything that would "create a feeling of disregard for any authority of the

Government". But at the same time, he appreciated its necessity at times. During the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Birla wrote to Thakurdas :

"Regarding the present agitation and the results of the [first] Round Table Conference, I agree that we should try our best to get the country out of the present turmoil. ··· There could be no doubt that what we are being offered at present is entirely due to Gandhiji ...if we are to achieve what we desire, the present movement should not be allowed to slacken. *We should, therefore, have two objects in view : one is that we should jump in at the most opportune time to try for a conciliation and the other is that we should not do anything which might weaken the hands of those through whose efforts we have arrived at this stage.*"[128]

The final aim was "conciliation" : the limited, controlled mass action of the Gandhian variety was aimed at obtaining some concessions. As Gandhi often said, co-operation with British imperialism was the end and non-co-operation was a step towards it.[129] Birla, no doubt, had a hand in the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in March 1931.[130] Later, he devoted all his energies and influence to directing the Congress movement along the peaceful, constitutional channel and to putting "a stop to any kind of direct action." He was strongly in favour of dominion status and wanted to retain the British connection. He felt that the government "should be mended and not ended"[131] and that there should be "settlement through persuasion."[132] More of Birla's role later.

Despite their different reactions to the limited mass actions initiated by the Congress leadership, there was fundamental unity among these three groups. First, they had the same political goal—self-government within the British empire ; they all were anxious to retain the British connection.

Second, all these groups abhorred mass action. The difference lay in the fact that when the Birla group recognized that mass action within strict limits under the direct leadership of Gandhi and his chief lieutenants was at times necessary to serve their class interests, and felt the need for using Gandhi and the Gandhians and their "constructive activities" for forestalling or containing what Thakurdas described as "more vicious agitation", the others were not as far-sighted and were opposed to it. Generally speaking, all the groups preferred the peaceful, constitutional path and wanted to be led to their goal by the British raj in whom they had considerable faith and confidence.

Third, extremely friendly relations existed between the big bourgeois of the different groups and the Gandhian leadership. Even those who actively opposed Gandhi-initiated limited mass action helped him and his lieutenants in other ways and at other times. And their help, especially the very substantial funds they placed at the disposal of the mahatma and his close associates, and their advice were eagerly sought after by the latter.

The following appraisal of the character of the Indian big bourgeois by Gandhi, their great friend, may be found interesting :

"I belong to a province which has a large number of textile mills, and I have happy relations with millowners. But I know that they have never stood by the country in the hour of its need. They plainly tell us that they are not patriots, that their sole aim is to make money."[133a]

The Muslim Compradors

Besides these three groups of Marwari and Gujarati business magnates including Parsis, there was another group consisting of big Muslim compradors like M.A.H. Ispahani, Sir Rafiuddin Adamji, Sir Abdulla Haroon and Habib. The adoption of the Nehru Committee Report by the so-called All Parties Convention held in Calcutta at the end of 1928 and in the beginning of 1929 marked for them the parting of the ways. They were much weaker than the Hindu and Parsi big bourgeois and were hostile to the aspirations to set up a strong centre within a united India. They were afraid they would be swept away in an India where the centralized state machinery would be in the hands of the representatives of the Hindu business magnates. In a sub-continent like India, colonial and semi-feudal, the outlook of the big bourgeoisie which, generally speaking, came from certain castes and communities, was religious, communal, obscurantist and medieval. To prove this point a few instances may suffice. After the partition of the sub-continent on religious lines, Pakistan became an Islamic state. In a letter to

Congress boss Vallabhbhai Patel on 5 June 1947, when the Mountbatten plan had been formally adopted, B.M. Birla, G.D. Birla's brother, wrote : "Is it not time that we should consider Hindustan as a Hindu State with Hinduism as the State religion ?"[133] In the mid-twenties when Hindu-Muslim riots vitiated life in Northern India G.D. Birla was in favour of proselytizing Muslims by force.[134]

The Muslim compradors wanted to have Muslim-majority provinces as autonomous units within an Indian federation where the federal centre would be weak and residuary powers would be vested in the provincial units. When their hopes faded away, they started organizing themselves. From about the beginning of the thirties Muslim Chambers of Commerce began to be set up. The following lines from Thakurdas's letter to G.D. Birla are interesting :

"Regarding the Muslim Chamber, I understand it may be a tame affair. You are quite right when you say that they are too late in the field."[135]

Ultimately, in March 1940, the Muslim business magnates raised the demand for a state of their own—Pakistan—where they could control the state machinery to fulfil their ambitions. Every Congress movement since 1930 was looked upon by this group with suspicion and hostility.

Towards Multila eral Dependence

A significant thing was taking place during the inter-war years, especially the thirties Though, as we have seen, there was influx of British capital, particularly in the 1920s, the growth and expansion of British expatriate capital in India showed a declining trend. The foreign managing agencies retained their control over their extensive commercial and industrial empires, but as the flow of fresh foreign capital was not adequate, they accepted more and more Indian capital to run them. Indian big bourgeois—Thakurdas, Sethna, Birla, Goenka, Bangur, Jatia, etc.—took their seats on the boards of directors of many cotton textile, match, jute, paper, coal and other companies managed by European managing agencies, but the Indians had no control over them. There was a fusion of European and Indian big capital, and large chunks of Indian capital, subordinated to foreign capital, played the role of a junior partner.[136]

By the end of the period, British expatriate capital, represented by Andrew Yule, Bird-Heilgers, Jardine Skinner, Killick Nixon and others, had served its *main* age-old purpose: that of mediating between metropolitan capital and the Indian market and sources of of raw material. At the same time metropolitan capital had attained the stage of monopoly capitalism and, as a result of increasing concentration, there emerged giant monopolies such as Imperial Chemical Industries, Unilever, Guest Keen and Nettlefold, Philips and G.E.C. The character of foreign investment in India began to change from before World War II. As Hobsbawm puts it, "gradually, the sun of the old-fashioned rentier was setting" and the sun of the giant international corporation was rising.[187] The typical foreign investment before the coming of the transnationals was small, made by individuals, and directed by expatriates through managing agency firms. During this period giant corporations started setting up their own subsidiaries. ICI, Unilever, Philips, Union Carbide, Metal Box, Guest Keen Williams, Dunlop, British Oxygen, Swedish Match, G.E.C., and several other international corporations established their manufacturing units in India to dominate its industry. The protection granted to industries like matches was enjoyed to a great extent by foreign monopolies. In matches, protection not only helped the Swedish giant but assisted it to oust many indigenous concerns.[188]

Second, the inter-war period marked the beginning of the transition from India's "unilateral dependence" on Britain to its "multilateral dependence" on several advanced capitalist countries led by the U.S.A. The process had started: from a monopoly possession of Britain, India was changing into a happy hunting ground of the monopolists of different imperialist countries. The beginning during the inter-war years was a modest one, as all beginnings are. It was modest, particularly because Britain's direct rule over India, the end of which U.S. imperialism dreaming of building a world-wide informal empire devoutly wished, especially during World War II, had not yet terminated.

Britain was no longer the leading capitalist country of the world, which role the U.S.A. had come to play. Before World War II, General Motors, Ford, Standard-Vacuum, Caltex, Firestone, Union

Carbide, Remington Rand and other U.S. corporations set up their branches in India. Mellon, an American company, acquired aluminium plants, and Ludlow Jute Company set up a unit to manufacture jute mill machinery. The biggest managing agency firm in India—Andrew Yule & Co. Ltd.—which controlled a large number of jute mills, coal mines, engineering companies and so on was a subsidiary of Morgan, Grenfell and Co., which again was a British subsidiary of the American house of the Morgans.

Close links were also being forged by some leading Indian business houses with U.S. monopolies. The three big hydro-electric companies promoted by the Tatas in Western India came under the joint control of the Morgans and the Tatas from 1929. The management was handed over to the Tata Hydro-Electric Agencies Ltd., a company formed jointly by the American and Foreign Power Co. Ltd , a Morgan subsidiary, as the dominant partner, and the Tatas. Walchand Hirachand relied entirely on the Chrysler Corporation of the U.S.A. to set up an automobile factory in India. Another U.S. company, the Inter-Continent Corporation of New York, planned, designed, constructed with men and machinery brought by it and ran an aircraft factory on behalf of the Hindustan Aircraft Company promoted by Walchand Hirachand, the Mysore State and the Government of India. The Birlas too were exploring chances of collaboration with U.S. automobile giants to set up an automobile plant in India. These marked the modest beginnings of what was going to be after 1947 the dominant feature of the relationship between imperialist and Indian big capital.

It may be noted that the establishment ofbranches by giant foreign corporations was viewed with suspicion by a section of Indian business magnates. Early in April 1938 the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution viewing "with grave concern the rapid increase in the number of companies owned and managed by foreign nationals." It had "no objection to the use of foreign capital or to the employment of foreign talent", but wanted them to be "under the control, direction and management of Indians". At its annual meeting in April 1939 the FICCI also expressed its concern at the situation arising from foreign interests establishing industries behind a protective tariff wall... "[130]

Interestingly, at a meeting of the National Planning Committee, held on 8 June 1939 under Nehru's presidentship, and attended by, among others, Walchand, Thakurdas and Ambalal Sarabhai, a resolution expressing "grave concern" at "the increasing influx into India of foreign-controlled industrial establishments" came up for discussion and was then swept under the carpet.[140]

In fact, what the Indian big bourgeoisie objected to was not the influx of foreign capital but the establishment of *fully-owned* branches or subsidiaries of the transnationals. They were quite aware that they, so blissfully ignorant of and disinterested in techniques of production, would have to depend on them for capital goods and technology for setting up new industries—chemicals, automobiles and so on. When the Tatas, Birlas, Walchands were inviting transnationals, they could hardly be very squeamish about the question of control, whatever might be their formal resolutions, adopted often as bargaining counters or to allay nationalist suspicions. They were not so stupid as to be unaware that technology and technology embodied in capital goods is the key to power. That is why the Birla mouthpiece, *Eastern Economist*, opposed the suggestion of the National Planning Committee that "investment of foreign capital should not ordinarily be permitted to involve ownership and management *in respect of industries of national importance*". It also opposed its proposals that the vast amount of foreign capital required for economic development should be accepted in the shape of loans by or through the state and that "the foreign interests exercising a predominant control over certain vital industries should be compulsorily bought up". Such views appeared to the Birla organ as 'extreme': *it pointed out that "it may not be possible to have foreign capital completely divested of the powers of control."*[141] What the Indian big bourgeois, fully conscious of their inherent weakness, wanted was not really control but a slice of the cake—some stake in the luscious enterprises of transnationals.

The Role of Sub-Exploiter

Another reason why the Indian big bourgeoisie felt enamoured of "the British connection" was that they had a large stake in the British colonies in South-East Asia and East Africa. Indian big capital not only played the role of an underling to foreign capital at home but went abroad to exploit other British colonies under the umbrella of British power. As S.B.D. de Silva puts it, "Like the remora which travels long distances by attaching itself through its dorsal slicker to the body of a shark, Indian capital went along with Britain's overseas expansion."[142] The role of the Indian big bourgeoisie was that of a sub-exploiter in other British colonies as in India.

In Burma, Indian businessmen controlled about two-fifths of the value of imports and about three-fifths of the value of exports.[143] In a memorandum to the FICCI in 1941, the Indian Imperial Citizenship Association, of which Gandhi was a founder and with which Thakurdas and many other Indian business magnates were actively connected, estimated total Indian capital investment in Burma at Rs. 250 crore.[144] In that country, the Nattukottai Chettiyar groups alone, based in Tamil Nadu, had invested about Rs. 75 crore in usury and trade and owned one-fourth of the cultivable land of South Burma in the early thirties when Burmese peasants, hit by economic depression, failed to redeem their mortgages.[145] The Birlas, too, owned a starch factory there. It seemed, as N. R. Chakravarti observed, "an Indo-British occupation rather than a British occupation."[146]

In Malaya, the Chettiyar groups, besides other Indian groups, set up their trading and money-lending firms as the British opened up different regions for colonial exploitation. Besides, their investments in rubber plantations and coal mines were considerable.[147] As money-lenders the Chettiyar groups played an intermediary role between British banks and the local people, both in Burma and in Malaya.

In Sri Lanka, the import trade in rice, flour, sugar and textiles was dominated from about 1908 by Memon merchants from India,[148] and a cotton mill was managed by the Currimbhoys.[149]

"Prior to the 1920s," writes Marcovits, 'Indian capitalist interests in Bombay wanted to transform Kenya into an Indian subcolony."[150] In East Africa a Parekh family and a Patel group had big cotton trading concerns and set up cotton mills. The Parekhs were helped by the Mafatlals while the Sarabhais of Ahmedabad were the principal financiers of the firm managed by the Patels.[151] Of the major groups, at least Mafatlal, Sarabhai and Thakurdas had considerable interests in Uganda. Thakurdas had important interests also in Tanganyika (now Tanzania).[152]

A memorandum presented by the Indian Association (Tanganyika Territory), Dar-es-Salaam to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on East Africa in 1931 stated that Indians were "indispensable as middlemen between large European firms and the producing and consuming natives" and that "In commerce, Indians continue to hold conspicuous control over the market, as much as that most of the export to and import from India, Britain and other foreign countries passes through their hands".[153]

Indian big capital, protected by British guns, spread its tentacles to other British colonies and served the raj to serve itself. This was one of the strong reasons why Indian business magnates insisted on retaining the imperial connection From Jamsetji Tata to Purshotamdas Thakurdas and G. D. Birla—all Indian big businessmen swore by their loyalty to the British connection. Not surprisingly did Thakurdas say to a friend : "I am for the British connection because no other set of people endowed with power have the same substratum of fair play. To deal with them is therefore no losing game."[154]

As we shall see, Gandhi and his chief lieutenants, including Jawaharlal Nehru, wanted to, and did, retain the British connection. Nehru often talked of independence which he explained as severance of connection with the British raj, but whenever the test came, he toed the mahatma's line. To Gandhi, dominion status was preferable, for it meant "independence plus the British connection"—something superior to mere independence.[155] The Indian business magnates and the Gandhis, their political representatives, were opposed to independence which would mean coming out of the imperialist orbit, for this meant to them an uncertain future in India and loss of the privilege to play the sub-exploiter's role in other British colonies.

It is not surprising that they were anxious to remain within the British Commonwealth ; but, in the forties, they also longed to hitch their wagon to America's more resplendent star, as Nehru told Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's Personal Representative in India, in April 1942.[156]

NOTES

1 Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 362-3, 503-4.

2 Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class*, 405-6, 407.

3 Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and British Imperialism", in R. S. Sharma (ed.), *Indian Society : Historical Probings*, 391, 393, 404.

4 S. K. Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, Chaps. 2, 7, 8, 9.

5 Thomas A. Timberg, "Three Types of the Marwari Firm", *IESHR*, March 1973, p. 2.

6 *The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, I, 299, 301, 302.

7 Timberg, op cit, 26-7.

8 Ibid, 23 ; see also Timberg, "The Origins of Marwari Industrialists", in Robert and Mary Jane Beech (eds.), *Bengal : Change and Continuity*, 162.

9 Timberg, "Three Types of the Marwari Firm", op cit, 25.

10 P. Lovett, *The Mirror of Investment 1927*, 1.

11 Timberg, "Three Types of the Marwari Firm", op cit, 29.

12 Balchand Modi, *Desh Ki Itihas me Marwari Jati Ka Sthan* (Hindi), Calcutta, 1925, 541-2 : cited in Rajat Kanta Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, 228.

13 Ibid, 229.

14 Ibid, 228, fn. 3 ; Timberg, "Three Types of the Marwari Firm", op cit, 30, 31, 34, 35.

15 See Timberg, *The Marwaris*, 66, 170-1.

16 Timberg, ' The Origins of Marwari Industrialists", op cit, 166.

17 Facts and quotations in this paragraph are from Ram Niwas Jaju, *G. D. Birla* see also Timberg, *The Marwaris*, 66, 162.

18 G. D. Birla, *Bapu*, I, 148-9 ; *CWG*, XLV, 5.

19 G. D. Birla. *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, Introduction, p.XIV.

20 Bagchi, "Reinforcing and Offsetting Constraints in Indian Industry", in A. K. Bagchi and N. Banerjee (eds.), *Change and Choice in Indian Industry*, 23.

21 See Sudip Chaudhuri, *Bengal Chemical, 1893-1977*.

22 Biswakarma, *Lakshmir Kripalabha Bangalir Sadhana*, 352-60.

23 Ibid, 336-37.

24 Ibid, 344-51 ; *Economic Times* (Calcutta), 2.9.86.

25 Biswakarma, op cit, 167-75.

26 Ibid, 176-86.

27 Ibid, 207-16 ; *Economic Times* (Calcutta), 27.8.86 and 24.2.87.

28 Howard L. Erdman, *Political Attitudes of Indian Industry*, 51 (note 38).

29 Sudip Chaudhuri, *Indigenous Firms in Relation to the Transnational Corporations in the Drug Industry in India*, 47.

30 *Survey of Small Engineering Units in Howrah*, 17, 18.

31 Ibid, 43.

32 Ibid, 60.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, 88.

35 Ibid, 94, 98, 105, 109.

36 Ibid, 186, 187.

The national bourgeois enterprises cited above belong to Bengal, except one—Alembic Chemicals. Readers should blame not my imaginary Bengali chauvinism but my real ignorance for failing to provide examples from other national regions. I can cite many names of such enterprises, but I confess I have little knowledge of their promoters—knowledge which is hard to come by. I am sure such *entrepreneurs* of different national regions do not differ essentially from one another, as they do from the compradors.

37 Karl Marx. *Capital*, III, 334.

38 Khuswant Singh and Arun Joshi, *Shri Ram* 33–4.

39 See Ghosh, op cit, 161-4.

40 Ibid, 189-94.

41 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 207.

42 R. S. Rungta, *The Rise of Business Corporations in India*, 277.

43 Hobsbawm, op cit, 191, 192.

44 Kahn, *Great Britain in the World Economy*, 66.

45 Ibid, 94-8.

46 D. H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India*, 196 ; see also Hobsbawm, op cit, 207.

47 Ibid, 213, 214.

48 Ibid, 223.

49 Cited in M. M. Malaviya, "Note", in Indian Industrial Commission 1916-1918, *Report*, 315.

50 See Ghosh, op cit, 170–3,

51 Cited in M. M. Malaviya, "Note", op cit, 317.

52 C. J. Dewey, "The Government of India's 'New Industrial Policy', 1900-1925", in K. N. Chaudhuri and C. J. Dewey (eds.), *Economy and Society*, 233 ; see also Ghosh, op cit, 191–2.

53 B. R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj*, 111 : Tomlinson cites Cabinet Office Papers, 23/29, Conference of Ministers, 9. 2. 22.

54 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 123.

55 Tomlinson, op cit, 143.

56 Helen B. Lamb, "The 'State' and Economic Development in India", in S. Kuznets, W. E. Moore and J. J. Spengler (eds.), *Economic Growth : Brazil, India, Japan*, 478.

57 Quoted in Geoffrey Tyson, *100 Years of Banking in Asia and Africa*, 157.

58 Malaviya, "Note", op cit, 317.

59 GOI, *Report of the Indian Fiscal Commission, 1921-22*, 158.

60 "Minute of Dissent", in ibid, 202, 203. Characteristically, "the suitable conditions" for safeguarding "the essential interests of India", which they recommended, were the same as the raj in its wisdom had itself laid down (see p. 203).

61 Ibid, 210.

62 FICCI *Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1927-51*, 55.

63 G. D. Birla, *The Path to Prosperity*, 144.

64 All Parties Conference 1928, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution for India*, 11.

65 *Review of Sugar Industry of India during 1934-35* (Supplement to the *Indian Trade Journals*), 23 May 1936, p. 6 ; cited in V. V. Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov, *A Contemporary History of India*, 184.

66 See ibid, 185.

67 Khuswant Singh and Arun Joshi, op cit, 206.

68 Thakurdas to Sir Stephen Demetriadi, London, 11. 12. 1929, PT Papers, File 42, Part VIII ; see also Thakurdas, "My Association with the Federation," FICCI, op cit, 184.

69 Frank Moraes, *Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas*, 44.

70 PT Papers, File 42, Part I.

71 Ibid.

72 PT Papers, File 42, Part II.

73 See Table on Indices of Industrial Production in B. R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914-1947*, 32.

74 B. R. Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire, 1880-1935," *IESHR*, Oct-Dec. 1975, 334-5.

75 Pavlov. op cit, 400.

76 Omkar Goswami, "Collaboration and Conflict : European and Indian Capitalists and the Jute Economy of Bengal, 1919-39," *IESHR*, Vol. XIX (2), 1982, 148.

77 Marcovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931-39*, 56.

78 Arun Joshi, *Lala Shri Ram*, 227.

78a See FICCI, op cit, 55, 57, 65.

78b Birla to Thakurdas, 16 Jan. 1931, PT Papers, File 42, Part VII.

79 Frank Moraes, op cit, 138-9 ; see also G. D. Birla to Lord Lothian, 4 Aug. 1932, PT Papers, File 126, Part II.

80 Benthall's Memo to Assocham, 4 Oct. 1931, Benthall Papers, Box XI, File 1 ; cited in Claude Marcovits, op cit, 81.

81 Marcovits, ibid, 81.

82 B. Chatterji, "Business and Politics in the 1930s", in Christopher Baker *et al* (eds), *Power, Profit and Politics*. 557 ; Chatterji quotes from Benthall to Mothersill, 10 July 1933 ; Benthall to Cleminson, 10 July 1933 ; Benthall MSS, XV.

83 Chatterji, ibid, 544.

84 Ibid, 557. Chatterji quotes Viceroy to Secretary of State, Pvt. tel., 11 Apr. 1936, L/E/9/1123.

85 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 52-3 ; also *Bapu*, I, 181.

86 Cited in Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj*, 120.

87 D. R. Gadgil, *Economic Policy and Development*, 114.

88 Ibid, 86.

89 P. J. Grigg to H. V. Hodson, 24.1.1939, Grigg Papers, File 2/11 (Churchill College, Cambridge); cited in B. R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj 1914-1947*, 53.

90 G. D. Birla, *Bapu*, II, 4-5.

91 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 49.

92 Ibid, 62-3.

93 PT Papers, File 107, Part I; see also G. D. Birla to Samuel Hoare, 2 Nov. 1931, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 64; Birla to Hoare, 16 Dec. 1934, in Birla, *Bapu*, I, 453.

94 Bipan Chandra, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936," *EPW*, Special Number, Aug. 1975, 1317.

95 PT Papers, File 107, Part II.

96 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 179.

97 Ibid, 178.

98 Ibid, 145.

99 Birla, *Bapu*, IV, 30-1.

100 Ibid, II, 206, 270, 337.

101 Ibid, III, 144.

102 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 2.

103 Ibid, 209.

104 Birla, *Bapu*, IV, 190-1.

105 Jaju, op cit, 243.

106 Thakurdas to G. D. Birla, 4. 7. 32, PT Papers, File 107, Part I.

107 PT Papers, File 142.

108 Ibid.

109 Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity 1917-1940*, 178.

110 See Moraes, op cit, 197; also Motilal Nehru to Thakurdas, 19.10.24 and Thakurdas to Motilal, 11.10.24, PT Papers, File 40, Part II.

111 See *The Bombay Congress Bulletin*, II, No. 241, 10 Oct. 1932; No. 244, 13 Oct. 1932; No. 247, 17 Oct. 1932, in PT Papers, File 101; also Extract from the *Congress Bulletin*, 19 July 1932, PT Papers, File 107, Part I.

112 Moraes, op cit, 202.

113 PT Papers, File 91, Part I.

114 Thakurdas to Irwin, 30. 5. 30, ibid, File 99, Part 1.

115 Thakurdas to Irwin, 10. 6. 30, ibid.

116. Thakurdas to Schuster, 30. 5. 30, ibid, File 91, Part II.

117 Thakurdas to Graham Pole, 9.7.30, ibid, File 99, Part 1.

118 Every kind of revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle was equated with terrorism by the Thakurdases.

119 Thakurdas to Hoare, 4. 9. 1933, PT Papers, File 132.

120 Thakurdas to G. D. Birla, 25.11.1932, ibid.

121 G. D. Birla to Samuel Hoare, 14.3.1933, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 51.

122 Mankekar, *Homi Mody, A Many Splendoured Life*, 34, 35.

123 M. Nehru to Thakurdas, 14.11.1924, PT Papers, File 40, Part II; M. Nehru to F. E. Dinshaw, 13.10.1924, ibid; Thakurdas to M. Nehru, 11.10.1924, ibid.

124 Thakurdas to M. Nehru, 30.10.1929, 4.11.1929; Thakurdas to T. B. Sapru, 27.12.1929; PT Papers, File 91, Part I.

125 Thakurdas to Sapru, 8.1.1930, ibid.

126 Lalji Naranji to Thakurdas, 28.3.1930, ibid, File 91, Part II.

127 Thakurdas to N. M. Mazumdar of Tata Ltd., London, 7.5.1929, PT Papers, File 42, Part II.

128 Birla to Thakurdas, 16.1.1931, PT Papers, File 42, Part VII.

129 CWG, XX, 365; XXV 199; XXVII, 2, 418; XLII, 87, 150; etc.

130 See Birla's "Despatch to Gandhiji from London", 14.6.1935, in Birla, *Bapu*, II, 51.

131 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 145.

132 Ibid, 258.

132a *CWG*, XXIX, 352.

133 Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50*, IV, 56.

134 Birla, *Bapu*, I, 9.

135 Thakurdas to G. D. Birla, 29.1.1937, PT Papers, File 177.

136 See Ghosh, op cit, 210-1.

137 Hobsbawm, op cit, 259.

138 *Report of the Fiscal Commission 1949-50*, III (Written Evidence), 137.

139 FICCI, op cit, 99.

140 PT Papers, File 223.

141 "Future of Foreign Investment", *Eastern Economist*, 23 Nov. 1945, 748-9; "Our Economic Development", ibid, 31 May 1946, 905.

142 S. B. D. de Silva, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, 153.

143 Ibid.

144 Kasturbhai Lalbhai Papers K-6, cited in Claude Marcovits, op cit, 183, fn. 5. To have an idea of the amount of this investment at today's prices one has to multiply it by sixty or more.

145 The Central Banking Enquiry Committee 1931, Vol. I, Part I, *Majority Report*, 95; Shoji Ito, "A Note on the 'Business Combine' in India—with special reference to the Nattukottai Chettiars", *The Developing Economies* (Tokyo), Sept. 1966, 370.

146 Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma*, 96; cited in de Silva, op cit, 156.

147 Raman Mahadevan, "Pattern of Immigrant Entrepreneurs: A Study of Chettiars in Malaya, 1880-1930", *EPW*, Jan. 28-Feb. 4, 1978, 146-52.

148 de Silva, op cit, 96.

149 Marcovits, op cit, 188, n. 24.

150 Ibid, 187.

151 Howard Spodek, "The 'Manchesterisation' of Ahmedabad", *Economic Weekly* (Bombay), 13 March 1965, 488.

152 Moraes, op cit, 211.

153 Durgadas, Hony. Secretary, The Indian Association (Tanganyika Territory), Dar-es-Salaam, to General Secretary, Indian National Congress, 2.5.1931, enclosing a copy of the memorandum presented by the association to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on East Africa, AICC Papers, File FD-1/1931.

154 Moraes, op cit, 77; see also Thakurdas to Sir Stephen Demetriadi of the London Chamber of Commerce, 8 Mar. 1928, PT Papers, File 71, Part II.

155 *CWG*, XLII, 375.

156 *TOP*, I, 665; *SWN*, XII, 194-5.

CHAPTER THREE

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. *Goals*

When hostile demonstrations greeted Gandhi on the eve of the Karachi Congress in March 1931, he said :

> "...I am trying to reach the same goal with them [the revolutionaries who believed in the armed overthrow of imperialist rule]. Only I am following a method wholly different from theirs."[1]

That their goal, Gandhi's as well as that of the revolutionaries, was the same—the attainment of India's independence—is held as an axiomatic truth by most historians and political scientists. For instance, Barun De writes that "there were no real links between the revolutionary terrorists and Congress leaders though *they had objectives in common*."[2]

It is our contention that not only the methods but the goals, the objectives, were quite different. The goal of the national revolutionaries as well as of the militant peasants and workers was full freedom outside the orbit of imperialism. But the goal of the top leadership of the Congress, as distinguished from its ranks and supporters, was what G. D. Birla in his letter to Professor Keynes described as "nothing more than a privilege to have...a decent place in the household of King George the Fifth."[3]

We shall not enter here into any debate on the question whether peaceful, non-violent and legitimate means *alone* are capable of defeating imperialism or whether they admirably served the interests of the classes that never sought freedom outside the orbit of imperialism but wanted self-rule or *swaraj* within the imperial framework.

We have seen that the peasantry including the *adivasis* waged numerous struggles, heroic and uncompromising, to liberate the regions in which they lived, and some of their leaders dreamed of making the Indian sub-continent an independent republic.

By the turn of the century the national revolutionaries, mostly of petty bourgeois origin, declared in unmistakable terms that their goal was India's freedom from all imperialist bondage. This ideal was upheld in many of their books, pamphlets and journals. Journals like *Yugantar* and *Bande Mataram* (published in India) and *The Indian Sociologist*, *Free Hindustan*, *Bande Mataram*, *Talvar* and *Ghadr* (published abroad) spread the message of uncompromising struggle against imperialist rule.

The national revolutionaries resorted to terrorist actions, assassinations of high British officials or their agents, in the belief that heroic retaliations would infuse courage into hearts of the people. But many of them believed in the need for mass mobilization, guerrilla struggle, etc. In an article written as early as 1893, Aurobindo Ghose, who initiated revolutionary terrorism in Bengal, had a taste of prison life and who after escaping to Pondicherry for fear of further persecution, chose to become a god-man rather than a revolutionary, said that "the proletariat among us is sunk in ignorance and overwhelmed with distress. But with that distressed and ignorant proletariat with the proletariat resides, whether we like it or not, our sole assurance of hope, our sole chance in the future."[5] *Bartaman Rananiti* (The Modern Art of War—in Bengali), published from Calcutta in 1907, discussed the tactics of guerrilla war, which it described as "the mode of fighting adopted by a nation which is weak, disarmed and oppressed by conquerors, but resolved to break the bondage of slavery." It also envisaged the desertion of the native troops of the "foreign king" and their joining the revolution.[6]

But these revolutionaries of petty bourgeois and national bourgeois origin could hardly translate into practice what they perceived intellectually. Besides, at the initial stage, they were permeated with Hindu religious ideas, used Hindu religious symbols in their organization and propaganda and were mostly alienated from Muslims. But their fearlessness and courage could hardly be surpassed. And tens of thousands of them courted martyrdom, torture and long imprisonment for the sake of their love for freedom.

It is worth noting that Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama, who lived as a voluntary exile in Europe and carried on revolutionary propaganda in Europe and America, represented India at the Stuttgart Conference of the Second International in August 1907, which was attended by Lenin. While moving a resolution on Indian independence, she strongly denounced the evils of British rule in India. She was opposed by almost the entire British delegation including Ramsay MacDonald. She also unfurled at the conference the flag of an independent India.[7]

We have seen that as the working class entered the political stage, it raised the demand for full independence and for the establishment of an Indian federal republic.

On the other hand, the Congress leaders held that, notwithstanding some drain of wealth from India, British rule was a divine blessing. Presiding at the second session of the Congress at the end of 1886, Dadabhai Naoroji, famous for his 'drain theory' rhetorically asked :

"Is this Congress a nursery for sedition and rebellion against the British Government (cries of no, no) ; or is it *another stone in the foundation of the stability of that Government* (cries of yes, yes) ? There could be but one answer, and that you have already given, because we are thoroughly sensible of the numberless blessings conferred upon us, of which the very existence of this Congress is a proof in a nutshell."[8]

The following verses from the "Congress Anthem", sung at the Congress session held in Bombay at the end of 1904, were a true reflection of the 'patriotic' spirit of the Congress leadership of those days :

'Disunion and discord
Have the ruin of India caused,
To restore her then
To her ancient prosperity
And develop her
With Britain's help,
Co-operate with your wealth,
Industry and enterprise
That King Edward's glory
May shine throughout the world."[9]

The constitution that was drawn up after the Surat Congress (1907) had broken up contained "the Creed of the Congress", which "laid down that self-government within the Empire was the goal of the Congress; and that it was to be attained by purely constitutional means. It was obligatory upon every one to sign this creed before he could become a member of the Congress."[10]

During World War I

World War I brought into sharp contrast the two political Indias —the India of the revolutionaries and the India of the Naorojis, Gokhales, Banerjeas, Tilaks, Jinnahs, Gandhis and Nehrus. On the one hand, with the advent of the war, the revolutionaries saw visions of liberating the country and, to achieve that end, prepared a grandiose plan, the ramifications of which spread to several countries of three continents—Asia, Europe and North America. On the other hand, as Percival Spear observed, "The outbreak of the war saw an outburst of loyalty to the British."[11]

Even before the outbreak of the war, several groups of Indian revolutionaries in India, France, Germany, Canada and the U. S. A. were busy preparing themselves for bringing about a country-wide upheaval in the event of war. With the coming of the war independence seemed round the corner and links were gradually established between those working at home and others working abroad.

In Bengal several groups of revolutionaries came together under the leadership of Jatindranath Mukherjee—a leader famous for bravery, courage and unostentatious simplicity and universally respected - and started preparations for an armed revolt. Madame Cama and one of her associates tried to stir up disaffection among the Indian troops sent to France. They were interned by the French government, and the troops of the Lahore and Meerut divisions were removed from France. In Berlin Virendranath Chattopadhyay, Bhupendra Nath Dutt and others formed the 'Indian Independence Committee.' It was joined, among others, by Mahomed Barakatullah, Har Dayal and Taraknath Das. They established links with the German government and were assured of help in arms and money in India's struggle for freedom. The German government instructed its embassies and consulates in different countries to help the Indian revolutionaries. The Ghadr Party, based in the U. S. A., appealed to the Indians then residing in the U. S. A., Canada and other countries to return to India and take part in the impending revolution.[12] In a letter which appeared in *New York Times* of 21 July 1915, Ram Chandra, editor of *Hindusthan Ghadr*, declared that *Hindusthan Ghadr* "is an uncompromising advocate of complete political independence and liberty for India."[13]

The message from Berlin that the Germans would be sending ship-loads of arms and the news that thousands of Indians were returning to participate in the armed revolt sent a wave of hope among the revolutionaries in India. They planned an armed uprising throughout India, especially seizure of control of Eastern India.[14]

British intelligence had knowledge of the Ghadr revolutionaries returning to India and many of them were sent to prison when they arrived. Those who eluded the network of British intelligence spread all over the Punjab and tried to stir up revolt among the peasants and soldiers, mainly among the soldiers of the British Indian army. Other revolutionaries like Rash Bihari Bose, Kartar Singh, Sachindranath Sanyal and Vishnu Ganesh Pingley had been moving from cantonment to cantonment urging Indian soldiers to mutiny. Contacts were made by the revolutionaries in cantonments from the North-West Frontier Province to Burma. As an Intelligence Bureau publication stated, "In Upper India, Rash Bihari Bose had made extensive plans for a general uprising among Indian troops."[15]

Some Ghadr and other revolutionaries had been contacting Indian soldiers in the Far East and South-East Asia—in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, etc. The Indian Independence Committee sent revolutionaries to Mesopotamia (now Iraq), Iran and other places in the Middle East to persuade Indian soldiers stationed there to mutiny. A provisional Free Government of India was established at Kabul on 1 December 1915, and plans were made to rouse the Pathan tribes in the north-west, organize an army and enter India to liberate it.

The response of the Indian troops was positive in many places. According to Sachindra Nath Sanyal, most of the regiments in India promised to take part in the uprising after it had started and only two regiments in the Punjab were willing to initiate it.[16] Decision was made at Lahore to stage an uprising on 21 February 1915. At the time there were a small number of British troops in India. But

British intelligence came to have prior knowledge of the planned uprisings from its planted agents, and the plots failed. Courtmartials were held at different places and several conspiracy cases were started. Many soldiers and revolutionaries were executed, many like Sachindra Nath Sanyal were sentenced to transportation for life or awarded other harsh sentences. Rash Bihari Bose managed to escape to Japan.

In Singapore the 5th Native Light Infantry Regiment -- a regiment of Indian Muslim soldiers—mutinied on 15 January 1915. At the same time another Indian army unit, the Malay State Guards, rose in revolt. Both were suppressed and many were shot.

Thailand was another centre of activities of the Indian revolutionaries. Arrangements were made to despatch arms there and to have Indians trained by German instructors near Thailand's border with Burma. It was planned that Indian armed forces would march into Burma and then into India. But the plan failed as most of the Indians who went to Thailand were arrested at Bangkok. There were several rebellions in Burma before and during the war Rangoon and Mandalay were among important centres of revolutionary activities in the east. Revolutionaries from Bengal and Ghadarites tried to stir up mutiny among the troops. Their attempts partially succeeded and there was an open revolt by the 130th Baluchis in January 1915. Another attempt at an uprising in October 1915 was foiled as the British had prior knowledge of it.

The revolutionaries in Bengal collected some arms by executing a plan which demanded much intelligence and courage, prepared bombs which they sent even to Lahore and waited for German arms. In the mean time they made elaborate preparations and, according to the report of the Sedition Committee, they made plans of seizing the control of eastern India. Adventurous youths were sent as emissaries to Batavia, Shanghai, Japan and other places to contact German officials and bring German arms. But the much-sought ship-loads of German arms never arrived though some arms sent by Indian revolutionaries abroad reached India. Those who had pinned their hopes on German arms and German instructors were cruelly disappointed. In Bengal alone 1200 revolutionary youths were put behind bars soon after the outbreak of the war.[17] Many were transported for life and some executed. Jatindranath Mukherjee and two of his comrades died in an armed encounter with the raj's men.

The Indian revolutionaries sought the German government's help but they did not become its agents They wanted to utilize the inter-imperialist contradictions to make India free As the official publication admitted, "the first Ghadr scheme, namely, that the Sikhs in America should return to India and raise an insurrection in the Punjab, owed nothing to the Germans in its inception and very little, if anything at all, in its execution ; in the later schemes, however, the Ghadr party and the Germans worked together." Referring to the failure of the attempts to send arms through Batavia and Thailand, the same publication stated : "Some of the Indian leaders were bold and fairly capable men, but the Europeans associated with them were a poor lot..."[18]

Thus, when World War I broke out, many thousands of revolutionaries in India and abroad staked every thing for the cause of freedom. Many became martyrs, many more suffered torture and imprisonment. Kartar Singh, one of those condemned to death in the Lahore Conspiracy Case held in 1915, declared that every slave had a right to revolt. When urged to appeal against the sentence of death, he replied : "Why should I ? If I had more lives than one, it would have been a great honour to me to sacrifice each of them for my country."[19] Theirs was a saga of fearlessness and courage and self-sacrifice at the altar of freedom.

The heroic efforts of the revolutionaries proved ineffective as they failed to mobilize the working masses behind them. The British imperialists adopted ruthless measures from the beginning, passed the Defence of India Act and did every thing it could to suppress them. The Defence of India Act, which armed the Government with powers to "do anything in regard to any person and his property, merely on *suspicion* that such a person *may act* in a way which in the opinion of the government was prejudicial to the public safety", was passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1915 with the willing assent of Gokhale and other Congress leaders. Under this 'lawless law', "terrible and inhuman atrocities were perpetrated" on revolutionaries and others on mere suspicion.[20] The revolutionaries no doubt failed, but they proved that they were no mere terrorists but men of vision who dared to storm the very heavens.

The other India of the feudals and the compradors, represented by the leadership of the Indian National Congress, resounded with effusive declarations of loyalty to the raj and loud pledges of full support to its war efforts. It was not surprising, for the feudals and compradors, especially compradors, were making hay while the war raged and the people suffered. The annual Congress sessions, held in 1914, 1915 and 1916, were graced by the presence of the governors of the provinces where they were held, and pledged their fulsome loyalty to the British throne. It may be noted that by 1916 the split between the Moderates and 'Extremists' had been mended. The Congress session held at the end of 1917 conveyed "to His Majesty the King-Emperor their deep loyalty and profound attachment to the Throne, their unswerving allegiance to the British connection and their firm resolve to stand by the British Empire at all hazards and at all costs." So did the annual session of the Congress in December 1918 swear by its loyalty to the British King.

On 1 May 1916, B.G. Tilak said in the course of his "Home Rule Speech at Belgaum" : "It is an undisputed fact that we should secure our own good under the rule of the English people themselves, under the supervision of the English nation, with the help of the English nation, through their sympathy, through their anxious care and through those high sentiments they possess."[21]

True to his character, Gandhi, speaking at a public meeting in Calcutta on 31 March 1915, asked his audience to "have absolutely no connection" with revolutionary youths and to "consider these persons as enemies to themselves and to their country" and declared that he would "rise against them", if "they wanted to terrorise the country."[22] On 4 February 1916 he said : "I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side ; if we are to reach our goal, *we should have an empire which is to be based upon mutual love and mutual trust*."[23] In his letter of 7 July 1917, he gave the pledge to the Viceroy's private secretary : "My life is dedicated to the preventing of the spread of the disease [revolutionary violence] and its uprooting in so far as it has gained a foothold."[24]

Besides making his offer to the Viceroy and the Bombay governor to serve in the imperialist war, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy on 29 April 1918 :

"If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper 'Home Rule' or 'Responsible Government' during the pendency of the war. *I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment*..."[25]

Gandhi went on a recruiting campaign in his native Gujarat, but the people hardly shared his devotion to the cause of the empire and asked him many uncomfortable questions including those about his creed of non-violence.[26] To B. G. Horniman, the editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, he wrote : "Really I am recruiting mad. I do nothing else, think of nothing else, talk of nothing else...."[27] Despite his brave efforts, he failed until 5 July to recruit a single person "apart from the co-workers who are all under promise to serve or *to find substitutes*."[28] This business of finding substitutes with ample funds at the mahatma's disposal was an interesting one.

Other votaries of non-violence also, like Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad, served as recruiting-sergeants to help Britain's imperialist war[29]. The Nehrus too—Motilal and Jawaharlal—sought to make their contributions to the raj's war efforts. Jawaharlal, as S. Gopal writes, "was willing to join the Indian Defence Force, constituted on the lines of the territorial army, and encourage other young Indians to do the same."[30] A notice to all interested persons was issued by, among others, Motilal and Jawaharlal, inviting them to form a strong committee at Allahabad as it was felt "desirable to make every effort to make this scheme [of the Indian Defence Force] a success and to urge our young men to join the Force." They also proposed to form committees in the principal towns of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) for the purpose.[31]

Thus World War I revealed the sharp contrast between the goals of 'elite politics' and the politics of the people. Later, the goal of 'elite politics' did not change and remained essentially the same, though, according to change of circumstances, different words or phrases—'Home Rule', '*Swaraj*', 'dominion status' or 'partnership within the empire on equal terms'—were used to describe it.

Nagpur Congress and After

The Congress session held at Nagpur at the end of 1920 declared that the attainment of *swarajya* by all legitimate and peaceful means was the goal of the Congress. About *swaraj*, as Jawaharlal wrote, Gandhi was "delightfully vague" and "he did not encourage clear thinking about it either."[32] Earlier, in a petition drafted in September 1917 to Secretary of State Edwin Montagu, Gandhi had described the Congress-League scheme of 1916, known as the Lucknow Pact, as "the *Swaraj* Scheme,"[33] which did not ask for even self-government.

At the Ahmedabad Congress in December 1921, Gandhi strongly condemned Hasrat Mohani's resolution which described the object of the Congress as "the attainment of *swaraj* or complete independence, free from all foreign control," and rallied his supporters to throw it out.

It was at the Madras session of the Congress in 1927 that a resolution declaring "the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence", moved by Jawaharlal, was adopted. How keen on independence were these esteemed leaders is evident from the fact that the same Madras session passed a resolution authorizing the Working Committee to prepare a *Swaraj* constitution for India in co-operation with other political and communal organizations, mostly loyalist.

Yet Gandhi was furious. He wrote in *Young India* denouncing the resolution as "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed." "By passing such resolutions," he remarked, "we make an exhibition of our impotence, become the laughing-stock of our critics and invite the contempt of the adversary."[34]

At the Calcutta Congress held in December 1928, the goal was changed to "dominion status", not as Balfour had defined it in 1926, not of the kind that prevailed then in Canada or Australia, but of the Motilal Nehru Committee variety.[35] Jawaharlal, who was a co-author of the committee's report,[35a] conceded that it "was, in fact, even less [indeed, much less]."[36] Interestingly, Gandhi wrote : "The *swaraj* of our coining is to be found in the Nehru Report."[37]

Under great pressure from radical elements and after waiting in vain till almost the midnight of 31 December 1929 for some message from the raj offering some concessions, the Lahore session of the Congress proclaimed "complete independence" as its goal. Speaking at a meeting of the Subjects Committee, Gandhi said that ' by the exigencies of circumstances, we are now *compelled* to declare that the Congress wants complete independence and fixes it as its '*swaraj*'."[38]

It is worth noting that the independence resolution endorsed the Delhi Manifesto of 2 November 1929. Signed by, among others, Gandhi and the Nehrus father and son the manifesto had appreciated "the sincerity underlying" Viceroy Irwin's declaration about a forthcoming Round Table Conference and hoped "to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Constitution suitable for India's needs."[39]

The raj did not feel unduly perturbed. The Secretary of State, Wedgwood Benn, wrote that "numerous back-doors" had been kept open "They all lead one to believe that they indicate a desire to satisfy the enthusiastic youth at the Lahore meeting while keeping effective options for the working committee."[40]

Many Congress leaders themselves believed that the independence resolution was rather a gimmick. "Mr Satyamurti,[41] for instance," wrote Congress president Jawaharlal Nehru on 7 January 1930, hardly a week after the resolution had been passed, "in a recent statement practically says that 'the declaration of independence was for show purposes only' and he can easily conceive of our going to a round table conference and agreeing to Dominion Status "[42]

Almost immediately after the Lahore session, the independence resolution was virtually repudiated by Gandhi himself and his chief lieutenants. In a statement to *The New York World*, which carried it on 9 January 1930, Gandhi, who was "dying to give and secure true heart co-operation"[43] with British imperialism, hastened to assure it as well as his big bourgeois patrons, who had a dislike for the demand for independence, that "the independence resolution need frighten nobody."[44] Again, in a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi conveyed the same assurance: "But the Resolution of Independence should cause no alarm···"[45] And he announced the following "Eleven Points," which he afterwards described as the "substance of independence":

"1 Total prohibition,
2 Reduction of the [sterling-rupee] ratio to 1s. 4d.,
3 Reduction of the land revenue to at least 50% and making it subject to legislative control,
4 Abolition of the salt tax,
5 Reduction of the military expenditure to at least 50% to begin with,
6 Reductton of the salaries of the higher grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue,
7 Protective tariff on foreign cloth,
8 The passage of the coastal Traffic Reservation Bill,
9 Discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder or the attempt thereat···, withdrawal of all political prosecutions, abrogation of Section 124 A, the Regulation of 1818 and the like, and permission to all the Indian exiles to return,
10 Abolition of C. I. D. or its popular control,
11 Issue of licences to use firearms for self-defence subject to popular control."[46]

Gandhi declared that if the Viceroy satisfied these "very simple but vital needs of India," he would "then hear no talk of civil disobedience."[47] Gandhi also communicated these terms "to Mr Bomanji who undertook to negotiate with Mr Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, as early as January 1930."[48] Interestingly, to the Nehrus, this appeared as "more like a surrender than any thing else."[49]

So, the independence resolution was thrown overboard—unceremoniously. What the supreme leader of the Congress was interested in was not independence but some concessions mainly for the big bourgeoisie. Even if all the eleven points were conceded, there would be no basic change, and British rule would continue.

The 'Independence Day' pledge, which the Congress leaders asked people to take on 26 January 1930, stated that "India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence." But the Congress leaders' pious resolutions, pledges and declarations were of dubious value. By adopting or issuing them the votaries of truth meant one thing for the people and an altogether different thing for the raj.

On 6 March 1931, almost immediately after the Gandhi-Irwin agreement was signed, Gandhi said to journalists :

"The Empire no longer remains [sic !], it having turned into a Commonwealth, and *swaraj* within the Commonwealth is perfectly possible---Even when I moved the Lahore resolution, I made it quite clear that independence need not mean complete dissociation from British connection."

Asked whether '*purna swaraj*' would "be possible within the British Empire", Gandhi answered : "It would be possible but on terms of absolute equality."[50]

It was the mahatma's uncommon talent that he could make such unabashed statements whenever the occasion demanded.

On 10 March 1931 Viceroy Irwin wrote : "I saw him [Gandhi] a couple of days ago and told him that, if he went on talking about complete independence, *although I knew what he meant*, he would greatly puzzle and upset British opinion, which would naturally jump to the conclusion that his goal was the break-up of the Empire. *This he explained to me was not so.*"[51]

In his note on his three hours-long interview with Gandhi on 19 March 1931, H. W. Emerson, then Home Secretary of the Government of India, recorded :

"He [Gandhi] recognized the difficulties that would be created by an undiluted resolution in favour of complete independence at the Karachi Congress [which was to meet about one week after] and by a declaration that the Congress would go on fighting until they achieved this. It seemed to me that *he himself had made up his mind to see that a course of this kind was not taken and that the actual resolutions of this nature would be qualified by speeches.*"[52]

Clause 2 of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement of 5 March 1931 was, indeed, a complete repudiation of the Lahore resolution on independence.[53] So, with his 'usual resourcefulness' (to quote Sitaramayya's words), he faced the Karachi Congress that met towards the end of

March. The opening sentence of the resolution on the agreement, "presumably drafted by Gandhiji," for adoption by the Congress endorsed the Gandhi-Irwin agreement which negated the demand for independence and then made "it clear that the Congress goal of *purna swaraj* (complete independence) remains intact." While announcing that the Congress delegation to the Round Table Conference "will work for this goal", it authorized the delegation to accept necessary adjustments. Presiding at the Congress, Vallabhbhai Patel, one of Gandhi's chief lieutenants, declared :

"This Independence does not mean, was not intended to mean, a churlish refusal to associate with Britain or any other power. ... If India is to reach her independence through consultation and agreement, it is reasonable to suppose that there will be British association .... I believe that Gandhiji's eleven points mean the substance of *Swaraj*."[54]

Addressing the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference in London on 15 September 1931, Gandhi, the sole spokesman of the Congress at the Conference, said that he aspired "to be a citizen... in a Commonwealth" and wanted "an indissoluble partnership" between India and Britain.[55] He also assured the plenary session of the Conference that it is friendship he craved for, that "my business is not to throw overboard the slave-holder and tyrant" and that "I do not want to break the bond between England and India."[56]

The burden of Gandhi's song before, during and after the second Round Table Conference was that he wanted independence with "partnership with Britain on absolutely equal terms." The following may help one to understand Gandhi's phrase "equal partnership in the British Commonwealth." He was asked at a meeting of Indian students in London on 13 October 1931 :

"Do you envisage a Viceroy when you speak of an independent India ?"

Gandhi replied :

"Whether the Viceroy remains is a question to be decided by both the parties. Speaking for myself, I cannot conceive a Viceroy remaining. But I can conceive a British Agent remaining there because there would be so many interests which the British have brought into being there which I personally do not seek to destroy and, in order to represent those interests and if there is also an army consisting of British troops and officers, I could not possibly say, 'No, there will not be a British Agent.' And since there are also the Princes concerned I cannot vouchsafe for what the Princes will do and, therefore, *I do not expect that under the scheme I have in mind there will be no British Agent there—whether he is called a Viceroy or a Governor-General.*"[57]

This was Gandhi's conception of an independent India—an India where British interests would remain entrenched, where "an army consisting of British troops and officers" would stay on, and where a British Agent, whether "called a Viceroy or a Governor-General," would remain. *An 'Independent India' of this kind was the goal of the top leadership of the Congress both before and after Lahore.*

During an interview on 1 April 1939 to Guy Wint, a British journalist, later attached to the External Affairs Department in New Delhi, Gandhi said :

"We cannot become an utterly independent nation—frogs in the well—and so I want the warmth of the friendship of the world. And so if we could become partners on equal terms *I want the Indo-British partnership to be permanent.*"[58]

It was the mahatma's sophistry alone that could describe truly independent nations as "frogs in the well." What does partnership "on equal terms," shorn of camouflage, mean—partnership between Britain, a leading imperialist country, and an India impoverished and abysmally backward, economically, socially, militarily, etc ?

The theory of 'partnership on equal terms' within the British Empire or Commonwealth was not Gandhi's original contribution ; he was echoing British imperialists who invented it to attract collaborators Commenting on it, "A Programme for the Indian National Congress," which was drawn up by M. N. Roy and approved by the Communist International and which first appeared in Roy's *Advance Guard* of 1 December 1922, stated :

"The theory of 'equal partnership in the British Commonwealth' is but a gilded version of imperialism. Only the upper classes of our society can find any consolation in it, because the motive behind the theory is to secure the support of the native landowning and capitaist classes by means of economic and political concessions allowing them a junior partnership in the exploitation of the country."[59]

In May 1939, Gandhi said to the *New York Times* correspondent, Steel :

"It [independence] need not be different from Dominion Status··· If British statesmen feel it convenient to use the word 'Dominion Status' about India rather than any other in order to describe that honourable agreement, I will not quarrel."[60]

And in *Harijan* of 16 December 1939, the mahatma wrote :

"...when a newspaper interviewer came to me in Yervada in 1930, I used the oft-quoted expression '*substance of independence*.' I told him that I should be satisfied with the substance, instead of the fleeting shadow, of independence. Similarly, I had said to a friend that, if Dominion Status was offered, I should take it and expect to carry India with me."[61]

When the Mountbatten Plan based on partition of India on communal lines and *dominion status* for the two new states—a plan the outline of which had been drawn up by V. P. Menon and Vallabhbhai Patel in late December 1946 or early January 1947[62]—was formally accepted, Gandhi, like Winston Churchill,[63] was happy. He told Mountbatten that "even during the war he had expressed himself as not being against it [dominion status]," and sent the Viceroy a cutting from *Harijan* as evidence.[64]

It may seem that, in order to prove our contention that India's independence was *never* the goal of the Congress leadership, we have given disproportionate importance to Gandhi's views and statements. But what may appear as disproportionate emphasis placed on them is, indeed, proportionate to the role he played in Congress politics. It was Gandhi who, prodded by Home Rule Leaguers, gave a call for an all-India *hartal* as a mark of protest against the Rowlatt Act without consulting the Congress or the Home Rule League. All the instructions he issued and the decision for withdrawal of the *satyagraha* were entirely his own. It was Gandhi who inaugurated the non-co-operation movement on 1 August 1920 under the banner of the Khilafat Committee without waiting for the decision of the Congress, which was to meet at a special session in the first week of the next month. Though the Congress programme of non-co-operation included boycott of British goods, Gandhi never ceased denouncing it, except boycott of foreign cloth. Similarly, he openly condemned the independence resolution adopted at the 1927 Congress session. Gandhi insisted on the strict observance of discipline by others but he was not bound by it.

By a resolution moved by Gandhi himself, the Ahmedabad session of the Congress, held at the end of 1921, appointed him "the sole executive authority of the Congress."[65] Again, the Congress Working Committee, meeting at Ahmedabad in February 1930, authorized Gandhi and others believing in non-violence as an article of faith to start Civil Disobedience as and when they decided.[66] It was Gandhi—not the Congress president—who held talks with Viceroy Irwin in February and March 1931 and signed an agreement with him. And on 2 April 1931 he was nominated by the Congress Working Committee as its sole delegate to the second Round Table Conference. In the Tripuri Congress in 1939, after Subhas Bose's election as Congress president defeating the nominee of Gandhi and the other top leaders, U. P.'s Prime Minister, G. B. Pant, violating all constitutional norms, moved a resolution requiring the president to constitute the Working Committee in accordance with Gandhi's wishes. The Ramgarh Congress, held in March 1940, transferred all power to him with complete discretion to act when and as he saw fit. Significantly, as soon as World War II started, G D. Birla wanted Gandhi to be made "the sole plenipotentiary" of the Congress. On 10 September 1939, Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, assured Birla that he had "mentioned to Vallabhbhai [Patel] your suggestion about making Bapu the sole plenipotentiary. V. [Vallabhbhai] said there would be no difficulty..."[67] The mahatma was the leader in whom the Indian big bourgeoisie reposed complete faith until about the mid-forties.

Gandhi was virtually the dictator of the Congress or, to use Jawaharlal's expression, its "permanent super-President."[68] He made and unmade presidents. Jawaharlal wrote that at the time when Gandhi thrust the presidentship of the Karachi Congress on Vallabhbhai Patel, it was pointed out to the mahatma "that he wanted to be Mussolini all the time while others were made by him temporary kings and figureheads."[69]

One should not assume that other top leaders, including Jawaharlal, disagreed with the mahatma on this issue. We have already quoted from Vallabhbhai Patel's presidential address to the Karachi session of the Congress in March 1931. Referring to "some recent speeches of Rajagopalachari", Jawaharlal wrote to Gandhi on 4 February 1940 that these talked "too compromisingly of Dominion Status and the like"[70] An article in Nehru's *National Herald* of 7 August 1940, of which, Patel suspected, the Congress socialist leader Narendra Deo was the author, said that the Congress "still talks about complete independence, but only as *make-believe.*---In short the Working Committee is prepared to convert India into a docile colony of the Empire."[71]

It is true that Nehru appears from many of his popular writings as an uncompromising anti-imperialist crusader. As we shall see, *it would be wrong to confuse Nehru's public stance with his private stand,* his words with his deeds. Words, especially Nehru's words, are often very deceptive. Gandhi often felt it necessary to warn people against taking Nehru's words seriously. He would assure people that

"...though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action."[72] And

"His communist views need not, therefore, frighten anyone."[73] And

"Jawaharlal's explosion is not as frightening as it seems from the flames. He had a right to let off steam, which he has exercised---I think he has calmed down now."[74] And

"Let this be made clear that there is no real difference between Jawaharlal and me. Our language often differs but we arrive at the same conclusion."[75] And

"---Jawaharlal will be my successor. He says whatever is uppermost in his mind, but he always does what I want."[76]

Even in his public utterances, Jawaharlal was rather ambivalent. In an article in *The Review of Nations* (Geneva), January 1927, Nehru wrote: "...no settlement short of complete self-rule will solve the problem. That self-rule may mean complete independence or it may mean what is called Dominion Status."[77]

In his circular letter of 3 May 1928 to the members of the Congress Working Committee, Jawaharlal stated that "substantial agreement" had been reached in the past with "a large number of organizations in the country, for instance, the All India Liberal Federation, the Home Rule League, the Southern India Liberal Federation, the Bengal Liberal League.…" Referring to the constitution that the Nehru Committee (of which he was secretary) was preparing, he hoped to devise a "reasonable plan which provides for all interests" with "the consent of most of the organizations…"[78] It may be noted that most of these organizations were loyalist : the very formation of the Liberal Federation had been suggested by Secretary of State Montagu[79] and one of the co-authors of the Nehru Committee Report, the liberal leader Sapru, had been a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, who had declared : 'I can say with pride that it is my country that makes the Empire imperial.'[80] Even without going through the Nehru Committee Report, the product of their joint labour, one can guess the kind of "reasonable plan" that Jawaharlal expected to devise with the consent and active participation of such people, some of whom, according to him, were "a part of the Government itself."[80a]

On 22 May 1928, when Jawaharlal was asked by the press whether he agreed with Pandit Motilal that dominion status was welcome he replied : "It is a knotty question, and I cannot say Yes or No."[81] It was the same Jawaharlal who had moved the resolution on complete independence at the Madras Congress only a few months before.

Significantly, writing to Annie Besant on 30 September 1928, Motilal said that he had no fear from Jawaharlal and his group, for "in spite of his raging tearing propaganda in favour of complete independence Jawahar is sparing no pains to make the All Parties decisions a complete success."[82]

While commending the Nehru Committee Report at the Calcutta Congress at the end of 1928, Jawaharlal supported at the same breath the demand for complete independence. As S Gopal writes, "This suggested both a desire to find common ground and a willingness to face both ways."[83] He also signed the Delhi Manifesto of 2 November 1929.

Edward Thompson, who was somewhat close to Jawaharlal, was not wrong when he wrote in *News Chronicle* of 2 January 1937 :

"In my reading of his character, Nehru is not primarily interested in making India 'independent' of the Empire."[84]

Indeed, Jawaharlal was as good an anti-imperialist as a socialist. During his first interview with Viceroy Mountbatten on 24 March 1947, Nehru said that, *basically*, "*they did not want to break any threads*, and he suggested '*some form of common nationality*'... Nehru gave a direct implication that they wanted to stay in ; but a categorical statement that they intended to go out."[85] At a meeting with the Viceroy and his staff on 10 May, Nehru said that he "himself was most anxious, apart from sentimental reasons, to have the closest possible relations with the British Commonwealth...He did not intend to talk about 'Dominion Status' *openly* because of the many suspicions. He wanted to prepare the ground."[86] Earlier, communicating to the British cabinet the desire of Nehru and Patel "for a form of early Dominion Status (but under a more suitable name)," Mountbatten hailed this development as "the greatest opportunity ever offered to the Empire."[87] In the record of his interview with Krishna Menon (Nehru's emissary) on 23 May, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India and Burma Henderson noted : "I gained the impression that those for whom he speaks are desperately anxious to maintain the closest possible nexus with the United Kingdom. He rather plaintively stated that they would be hard pressed by their own followers as having sold out to the British."[88]

On 23 May British Prime Minister Attlee wired to the Dominion Prime Ministers :

"They [the Congress leaders] said that though in order to secure assent of their party, they would have publicly to stress fact that it is inherent in Dominion status that Dominion can secede from Commonwealth whenever it wishes, in their view Hindustan would not ultimately leave the Commonwealth, once Dominion Status had been accepted....

"I must emphasize the need for extreme secrecy on this matter because if it became known that Congress leaders had *privately* encouraged this idea, the possibility of their being able to bring their party round to it would be serious[ly] jeopardized."[89]

The transfer of power on the basis of dominion status, indeed, marked the consummation and fulfilment of the historic mission of the Congress leadership, just as it marked the consummation and fulfilment of Britain's mission in India.[90] Whether dominion status or membership of the Commonwealth is as good as independence is a question that will be discussed later. Here we may note that the Lahore resolution on 'complete independence', *rejecting* dominion status, was a device, a ploy, of the leadership to sustain the illusions of the restive people—and perhaps of learned historians—about its anti-imperialist virtue.

It is important that one should distinguish between the goal of the Congress leadership and the goal of the vast numbers of people who supported them. There was a conflict between the aspirations of the former – the same as the aspirations of the big bourgeoisie and landlords—and those of the people. But the political polarization of the classes could not take place because of the ideological and political immaturity of the Communist Party. By flaunting the anti-colonial banner at times and by raising visions of the *Ram Rajya* or of the Socialist raj (as Nehru did), the leadership could sway the classes which were in fundamental conflict with imperialism as well as with its domestic props—the big bourgeoisie and big landlords. Gandhi, the Congress's man of destiny, could play astonishingly well what Edgar Snow called "the dual role of saint for the masses and champion of big business, which was the secret of Gandhi's power."[91]

2. '*The Circle of Unity*'

It is often assumed that the leadership of the Congress aimed at building an anti-imperialist national front of all classes of the Indian people to achieve India's freedom ; and that they were opposed to class war for fear that it would split the united front against the raj.

The question is : Who are the people ? Speaking of China in June 1949, Mao Tsetung said : "At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie."[1] At the stage of the anti-imperialist democratic revolution, when the basic contradictions are between the people on the one hand and imperialism and feudalism on the other, the feudal class and the comprador big bourgeoisie, the allies of imperialism, are outside the pale of what we call 'the people.' Within the nation (or nations) there is what Fernando Henrique Cardoso called the 'anti-nation.'[2] It is the feudal elements and the comprador bourgeoisie that constitute the 'anti-nation' at the stage of the national liberation struggle. The country cannot be liberated from the yoke of imperialism without simultaneously overthrowing these domestic classes. Defence of the interests of the latter amounts to defence of the interests of imperialism, for their interests are tied.

Which classes did the Congress leadership consider its friends and which classes its enemies ? Speaking at a meeting of the Federal Structure Committee of the second Round Table Conference, Gandhi declared that the Congress "claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes.··· But, if there is a genuine real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organization, and it is becoming so progressively."[3] Gandhi seemed to assume that the interests of all the classes could be reconciled and that, in ordinary circumstances, there was no "genuine real clash" between them. However, he was ever eloquent on his as well as the Congress's solicitude for the interests of the "dumb millions." Jawaharlal, a professed socialist, was even more eloquent and often wrote and lectured on the need for a socialist transformation of society—but peacefully, without violence, without a revolutionary struggle, without tears. Rhetoric often hides ugly sores of reality. What was the reality about the class character of the Congress ?

The Congress, which was an upper class organization until 1920, adopted a new constitution at its Nagpur session at the end of the year to reorganize itself. Gandhi, one of the most astute men of his time, could realize, particularly after the experience of the Rowlatt satyagraha and of the growing discontent and militancy of the people, that a reorganization of the Congress was the demand of the new situation, which seemed quite explosive. The time when India's political elite like the Gokhales and Mehtas and high officials of the raj had "worked and sparred together in a fine balance" was over. The masses had intervened The old leadership, which clung to 'the constitutional methods' *alone* and had few direct contacts with the masses, failed at this critical hour and had to yield place to a new one. The organizational structure of the Congress had also to change to meet the challenge of the times. So, on the one hand, the new constitution, that was framed, sought to broaden its base by dividing British India into twenty-one Congress provinces constituted more or less on a linguistic basis and by authorizing provincial Congress committees to form district and lower-level committees. Attempts were made to build a well-knit organization on a hierarchical basis, that would send its roots into the villages. Four-anna (twenty-five paise) membership was introduced, and in March 1921 a drive was launched to recruit ten million members and raise a fund of Rs ten million in three months' time. On the other hand, the new constitution made a major innovation by providing for a year-round working committee, the apex of the Congress pyramid, which, Gandhi wrote, "is to the Congress what a Cabinet is to Parliament."[4] The Nagpur constitution initiated a process of concentration of all organizational powers in the hands of a small coterie around Gandhi, and democracy within the Congress was formal while what prevailed was the rule of a coterie.

Inaugurating the annual session of the FICCI in April 1931, Gandhi urged the businessmen "to make the Congress your own and we would willingly surrender the reins to you."[5] Much before Gandhi's open appeal to them, the big capitalists were controlling to a great extent the reins of the Congress through Gandhi and his trusted lieutenants. Speaking in Bombay in July 1923, M R. Jayakar, once a prominent Congress and Swarajist leader of Maharashtra, said : "The internal control of politics in Gandhi's time is often exercised through the influence of wealth and patronage and a community like the Deccanis which can boast of no commercial magnates like the Tatas, Birlas and Kasturbhais, cannot possibly control politics from the inside. The influence that such men, by their patronage and capacity to finance, wield over political movements may not be obvious. It is none the less real."[6]

Even when Gandhi was experimenting with truth in South Africa the Indian big bourgeoisie found in him the man they were looking for. Huge funds were placed at his disposal by Indian business magnates as well as feudals like the Nizam of Hyderabad.[7] Firm ties were forged between them and Gandhi. His *ashrams* and all his activities—political, social, moral and spiritual—were financed by them. Chief among his many benefactors, Gujarati and Marwari *seths*, were Ambalal Sarabhai, Jamnalal Bajaj and G. D. Birla. As Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, wrote, Bajaj, a 'merchant prince', "had rendered himself Gandhiji's *kamadugdha* [wish-fulfilment milch cow]."[8] As early as July 1924 the mahatma acknowledged G.D. Birla as one of his mentors, whom God had given him.[9] Sarojini Naidu remarked that it needed Birla's millions to keep Gandhi poor. The entire expenses of Gandhi's *ashram*, which amounted approximately to one hundred thousand rupees in the early forties, were borne by the Birla brothers.[10] In a letter to Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, dated 31 August 1938, G. D. Birla assured Gandhi that "he need not keep any load on his mind concerning finance. So long as I can pay, he can always depend on me to do anything that he desires."[11] The mahatma was quite candid in this respect. Asking Rameshwardas Birla, G. D. Birla's elder brother, to send him about Rs. 1,50,000 for different purposes, Gandhi assured him that "if I don't get the amount, I will get angry neither with God nor with you. I have never struck the branch of the tree under which I have taken shelter and God willing, I am not going to do that in my lifetime."[12]

To quote B. Chatterji, "Gandhi (and the 'right wingers' in the Congress) was regarded by Birla as '*his man*' not because Gandhi was the capitalists' 'henchman' or 'tool' (as Benthall once described him. Benthall Diary 10 April 1936, Benthall Mss. [12]), but because the practical and ideological limits to his politics were eminently suited to the objective interests of the capitalists."[13]

While with his *ashrams*, an ascetic's garb and incessant outpouring of religious and ethical sermons, Gandhi had charisma for Hindus, especially caste Hindus, Birla had wealth. The two combined to form "a unique association," as Birla has aptly described his relationship with his "Bapu".

The entire Congress machinery as well as Gandhi's other organizations ran with the funds provided by the big bourgeoisie.[14] Writing of Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhi's organization man in the Congress, B G. Gokhale writes : "Much of his work after 1935 was done behind the scenes, in committee rooms and small caucus meetings. He selected his men well, and posted them in positions of authority and control in almost all the provinces."[15]

This was made possible by the enormous funds placed by the big bourgeois at the disposal of Gandhi and Patel. According to D. V. Tahmankar, a biographer of Vallabhbhai Patel, "Congress needed ample funds and Patel saw to it that it had them. *The secret of his success was his friendship with the business community which willingly co-operated with him.*" In an interview with G. D. Birla, the latter said to him : "Many a time he [Patel] utilized my help and money. I would get a telegram...when I arrived he would tell me what I had to do. Inevitably, the question of collection would come up."[16] Viceroy Wavell noted, perhaps not unjustly, that Patel was "strongly influenced by the capitalists and lives in the pocket of one of them, G. D. Birla."[17]

Not only Gandhi and Patel but other close associates of theirs had also pleasant relationship with the big bourgeois, though the bounties they enjoyed were certainly not equally generous. Rajendra Prasad acknowledged how he was benefited by such relationship.[18] S. Gopal writes that the Birla family provided fairly substantial monthly allowances to many leading Congressmen.[19] It would be no wonder if those who paid the piper called the tune. "By his close association with many millowners and *seths* such as Jamnalal Bajaj, Ambalal Sarabhai and Ghanshyamdas Birla and others", writes Rani Dhavan Shankardass, "the Mahatma gained a financial strength without which Congress politics could scarcely be carried on and which was no less vital than the strength which the *seths* gained from him"[20]

Significantly, in April 1929 Gandhi was writing to G. D. Birla : "Do try to collect contributions from the millowners. ...*Khadi may or may not gain*, but the mills are certainly making enormous profits as even Wadia has admitted. *If only the mills understand they can benefit still further.* Time alone will convince them."[21]

The front that the Congress leadership wanted to build included also the landlords and princes. The 1923 manifesto of the Swaraj Party, which emerged as a wing of the Congress and was entrusted from about the end of 1924 with the job of running the Congress machinery, assured the landlords that, "only by serving the true interests" of both the landlords and tenants, it could "find a solid base for *Swarajya*". The manifesto also declared that the party "cannot possibly dream of such madness as to undermine the very foundations of society as it has existed for hundreds of years by trying to eliminate an important and influential class from it."[22] Not to demolish the "foundations of [the] society as it has existed for hundreds of years" but to protect them was the policy of the Congress.

The Supplementary Report of the Nehru Committee assured landlords and capitalists that "All titles to private and personal property lawfully acquired and enjoyed at the establishment of the Commonwealth [the Commonwealth of India which might emerge if the British agreed to endorse the Nehru constitution] are hereby guaranteed."[23] About the princes, the Report of the Nehru Committee, of which Jawaharlal Nehru was a co-author, stated : "...we have provided (a) 'all treaties made between the East India Company and the Indian States and all such subsequent treaties, so far as they are in force at the commencement of this Act, shall be binding on the Commonwealth. (b) The Commonwealth shall exercise the same rights in relation to, and discharge the same obligations towards, the Indian States as the Government of India exercised and discharged previous to the passing of this Act." The Report explicitly pointed out : "So long as this characteristic feature of personal rule does not undergo a material change the expression 'Indian State' must be taken to mean 'the individual ruling prince of the State concerned' and has no reference to the nature of the administration."[24] The Supplementary Report said :

"We should like to make it clear that we do not desire any encroachment upon the rights of the States.... We stated then [in the main Report] that 'if the Indian States would be willing to join such a federation [between British India and the Indian States], after realizing the full implications of the federal idea, we shall heartily welcome their decision and do all that lies in our power to secure to them the full enjoyment of their rights and privileges'.... It is a mischievous suggestion which we entirely repudiate that there is any scheme in contemplation by which the Princes are to be 'placed in a position of subservience to the legislatures of the central or provincial government'...."[25]

The much-vaunted resolution on Fundamental Rights, adopted at the Karachi Congress, did not call for the abolition of feudal landlordism like zamindari or annulment of at least a portion of the peasants' usurious debts. Nor did it uphold the workers' right to strike. An economic programme which did not include the minimum democratic reforms has been extolled by many including Barun De, who describes it as the Congress Party's "political, economic and social programme of democracy for the future." Curiously enough, he holds that though "the Karachi Congress found itself unable to demand abolition of the large estates of the semi-feudal ..landlords," yet it marked "the introduction of the *radical and socialist trend* as a predominant element in the Congress programme."[26]

Assuring zamindars, Gandhi said :

"The Karachi resolution [on Fundamental Rights, which regarded private property as inviolable] can be altered only by an open session of the next Congress, but let me assure you that I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause. ..I am working for the co-operation and co-ordination of capital and labour and of landlords and tenants. The *Ramarajya* of my dream ensures the rights alike of prince and pauper. You may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing class war. ...He [Jawaharlal Nehru] does indeed talk of nationalization of property, but it need not frighten you."[27]

Similar assurances were given by Gandhi on many occasions.[28] There was also no reason why the zamindars should feel frightened by Nehru's rhetoric. It is true that it was his style to make public pronouncements of a quite radical character, and there lay the secret of his appeal to the progressive youth and intelligentsia. As Gopal writes, he proved to be "the best shield of the Congress against left-wing groups and organizations.'[29] That made him a most valued comrade of Gandhi. Nehru's *private* stand as well as his deeds were always reassuring. He wrote to a landlord of Uttar Pradesh that his views in favour of the abolition of the zamindari system "have no application to present day politics, and in any event the Congress is not committed to those views."[30] He told H. W. Emerson, Home Secretary, Government of India, that "he intended to buy them [the landlords] out rather than confiscate their estates, and even this only when the Congress party came constitutionally into power and not as the result of a peasant revolt."[31]

Speaking at a meeting of the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi said "Even up to now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs."[32] At a meeting of the Quakers in London, Gandhi stated : "There is a States' People's Conference and *it is held back under my iron rule. I have been holding them back....I have asked them to be satisfied with their present position.*"[33]

Nehru wrote to the Maharaja of Alwar after the Maharaja's army had fired on villagers in April 1946 :

"There is no question in my mind of treating the rulers of the States as superfluous and negligible or, as you say, with anything approaching contempt. I am fully aware of the part many of their ancestors have played in Indian history. These traditions are a part of our national heritage.... The Princes today and even more so tomorrow will have the doors of opportunities thrown open to them to play such part as they are capable of in the new India. In fact our approach has been a friendly one to all rulers as such...."[34]

In a message of 8 May 1946 to a meeting on 'Faridkot Day" Nehru stated : "We have said that we mean no ill to the rulers as such, and so far as we are concerned, they may continue as constitutional heads."[35]

The Congress leaders wooed the princes knowing full well that they were, to quote the mahatma, "puppets created or tolerated for the upkeep and the prestige of the British power."[36] Nehru approvingly quoted Rushbrook Williams who wrote in 1930 : "The situations of these feudatory states, checkerboarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful, loyal native states."[37]

It was one of the tasks of the Congress leaders including Nehru to try to defuse an explosive agrarian situation just as they sought to prevent workers' strikes from breaking out.[38] S. Gopal writes that during the non-co-operation days, when peasant struggles had broken out in Awadh (formerly Oudh) independently of any Congress influence, Jawaharlal's "attitudes implied informal collaboration with the Government in the maintenance of law and order....the Government [was] all the more anxious that the leadership of this movement should remain with men like Gandhi and Jawaharlal...."[39]

In November 1921, the district political conference held with Jawaharlal as president in Rae Bareli, one of the storm-centres of peasant struggle against the rapacious landlords and the colonial state, adopted a resolution advising the tenants, who were being driven out of their lands by landlords, to "live in harmony through mutual goodwill and sympathy." And the conference insisted "that although the recent Rent Act has made their position worse, still they should patiently bear all troubles, pay their rents and keep the welfare of the country [sic !] in view."[40] Nehru went on preaching the message of zamindar-peasant unity when zamindars were evicting peasants from their lands on a large scale.[41]

In April 1931, when the economic depression hit the peasants hardest, Nehru in an "Appeal to the *kisans* of Allahabad district", asked them to "remember, whether the zamindars ill-treat you or not, you will not ill treat them....I hope that our zamindar brothers will not be harsh, will sympathize with the kisans and try to reach an agreement with them."[42]

When, despite the efforts of the Congress leaders to foil agrarian struggles, the peasants were on the war-path, the Congress leaders including Nehru did not hesitate to do their best to isolate and suppress them.[43]

The interests of zamindars and other landlords were dear to the Congress leaders, though leaders like Nehru might indulge in occasional denunciations of them to preserve their 'leftist' image. Even the Faizpur Congress, held under the presidency of Nehru in December 1936, did not include the abolition of feudal landlordism as one of the items of its programme despite the stiff fight put up by the Kisan Sabha leaders like Swami Sahajananda. It was the Congress election manifesto of late 1945 that, for the first time, spoke of the abolition of intermediaries between the State and the peasants *on payment of equitable compensation to them.* It may be noted that several years earlier the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, set up by the Bengal Government in November 1938, had recommended the abolition of the Zamindari system.

It is quite significant that the Congress leadership wanted that this united front of the comprador bourgeoisie, big landlords and princes should include British capitalists in India. Writing in *Young India* of 25 June 1925, Gandhi asked Sardar Jogendra Singh "not [to] entertain any fear of Englishmen being excluded from *the circle of unity*".[44]

In November 1924, when Jawaharlal was general secretary of the Congress, it convened an all-Parties Conference in Bombay, which adopted Gandhi's resolution appointing a committee "to consider the best way of *re-uniting all political parties in the Indian National Congress and to prepare a scheme of swaraj,* including the solution of Hindu-Muslim and like questions in their political aspects...." As part of the resolution it was proposed by Gandhi that several dewan bahadurs and knights, 'Liberals', Swarajists and non-Swarajist Congressmen, Hindu Mahasabhaites and Muslim Leaguers, the president of the European Association, an association of British capitalists in India, and the president of the Anglo-Indian Association and so on should form the committee "to prepare a scheme of swaraj", among other things.[45] Not only Indian dewan bahadurs and knights but also representatives of British expatriate capital were invited by the Congress "to prepare a scheme of swaraj" and to assist in the re-organization of the Congress.

In an interview to *The Statesman* on 1 May 1925, Gandhi said :

"Europeans may well co-operate, on the internal [Gandhi's 'constructive programme'] as well as on the external side [the programme in the legislatures represented by the Swaraj Party'.... As regards the external side, *if they are satisfied that we mean what we say, that we have absolutely no desire even if we could, to drive* *out the English, or to end the British connection, they should make common cause with us.* ..I am a born co-operator, but non-co-operation with me became a necessity ; but I am waiting for the opportunity when I can declare that I will again become a hearty co-operator."[46]

Invited to a meeting of the European Association held on 24 July 1925 at the Grand Hotel, Calcutta, Gandhi stated :

"*I am dying to co-operate.....The destinies of England and India have been thrown together and have been thrown together for a good purpose, namely, the service of humanity*, and I personally never miss the opportunity of understanding the European viewpoint. It is in that mood that I approach you this evening and ask you to reciprocate."[47]

On 5 March 1931, the day he signed his pact with Irwin, Gandhi issued a lengthy statement to the press, in which he said :

"I would like to make a similar appeal[48] to the English. *If India is to come to her own through conference and consultation, the goodwill and active help of Englishmen are absolutely necessary.*"[49]

Gandhi concluded his address to the annual session of the FICCI in April 1931 with a similar appeal to Englishmen for co-operation. While reminding them of "the services rendered to the Congress in the past by distinguished Englishmen and women," he claimed that "the Congress seeks to represent all" and *hoped that, with the greater co-operation of Indian businessmen and of the English, "civil disobedience may not have to be resumed."*[50]

So, after withdrawing the civil disobedience movement, Gandhi was anxious to abandon it for all time. It was through "conference and consultation" and co-operation with Englishmen that he wanted to lead the Congress to its goal.

The front of all native and foreign exploiters that the top Congress leaders sought to build up was obviously a front against the people—"the dumb millions"—for whom there was no dearth of solicitude in the speeches and writings of Congress leaders, especially Gandhi and Nehru. Only it would be hard to reconcile their interests with the interests of the domestic and foreign sharks. That is why whenever the interests of the latter were challenged by the struggles of peasants and workers, the Congress leadership never hesitated to come out in defence of those interests and in putting down the struggles. (More of this later).

A report of Gandhi's interview on 1 April 1939 with Guy Wint, who had been sent by Sir George Schuster, a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, is quite revealing. In answer to Wint's questions, which had been submitted in advance, Gandhi said that "the revolt of [the] younger intelligentsia against liberalism" was no *danger*, because "it was a passing phase, and confined to Collegiates, with whom it was nothing more than a temporary indigestion.... As regards the Labour unrest, Gandhiji said that he did not *dread* it much, for factory labourers were not more than 20 lakhs.' According to him, "the agrarian unrest is a *much greater danger*, but if the Congress retains non-violence *it is bound to be disciplined. We* who believe in non-violence *are trying to cope with it*, but we may fail. And yet we are not going the way of China.... But I agree that you have spotted *the real danger*. However it will cease if the Congress can produce the real type of workers for the villages."[51]

Significantly, to the mahatma, 'the revolt of the younger intelligentsia against liberalism,' 'the labour unrest' and the agrarian unrest' were all dangers, of which one was to be dreaded more than the others. In the five page-report of the interview, there is not a single word about the appalling misery and oppression of the peasantry and the workers by the colonial state, the landlords and foreign and native business magnates. Instead of seeking to remove the causes of agrarian unrest, Gandhi spoke of his 'determination' to 'cope with it' and getting it 'disciplined' with his weapon of 'non-violence' and by putting 'the real type of workers' in the villages.

The 'circle of unity' Gandhi and his lieutenants sought to build closely reflected their determination to preserve the social system based on the cruellest violence, however radical and socialistic may sound the rhetoric of Nehru. In an article entitled "Of Princes and Paupers" in *Navajivan* (Gujarati) of 22 March 1931, Gandhi wrote :

"...it is the dharma of the poor not to bear malice towards the rich. That their poverty is largely due to their own fault, their own failings, is some thing that the poor should realize."[52]

Whom, then, did the Congress represent? No doubt, after 1920, the Congress became a mass organization and enjoyed the support of a large section of the people, mainly the caste Hindus. But if its class character is to be judged not by its class composition nor by the support it could mobilize, but by the class interests it served, it continued, as before, to represent the comprador big bourgeoisie and big landlords.

3. *Forms of Struggle*

India was at the crossroads in the years after World War 1. Two roads lay before it: one led to genuine freedom outside the orbit of imperialism; the other to self-government within the imperialist orbit—a kind of semi-colonial status that would give it *formal* independence but would bind it to imperialist countries with many threads, visible and invisible, and make it dependent on them.

Towards the end of World War 1 and in the post-war years, unrest swept through this sub continent. The struggles of workers and peasants were breaking out in various places. The imperialist war, the intensification of the misery it caused, the political oppression during the war and the impact of the November Revolution in Russia raised the question sharply: Which of the two roads would India take? The answer depended on the relative strength and weakness of the contending class forces in India. The peasants, artisans and factory workers, who were the most deprived, as well as the urban petty bourgeoisie, who had a cheerless present and a dismal future before them, felt the urge and struggled to be free. Their method of struggle as well as that of the national bourgeoisie to overthrow imperialist rule was a combination of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle.

On the other hand, the compradors thrived during the war at the expense of the people as never before and earned huge speculative profits. While seeing rosy visions of growth and expansion, which some of the raj's proclamations about 'reforms', the setting up of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-8 and its positive recommendations, etc., conjured up, the big bourgeoisie never tired of giving sickening expression to its loyalty to the raj. The path that they wanted India to take was the path that led to colonial self-government, dependence and hell.

The British imperialist strategy was, on the one hand, to contain anti-imperialist struggles of the people by associating more and more friendly and reliable Indian elements with the administration of the country, by making devolutions of power *by stages* to representatives of those classes which were the props of colonial rule, to those who could be depended upon to act as imperialism's front-men and safeguard its vital interests ; and, on the other hand, to arm the government with powers of repression and suppress with all ruthlessness those who challenged its rule. "In November 1916," Tomlinson writes, "the Government of India passed a long resolution proposing a definite goal for British policy—'the endowment of British India as an integral part of the Empire, with self-government' —and some steps towards attaining it, including increased representation in local government and on provincial councils and an increase in the proportion of Indians in the higher reaches of the civil service."[1] On 20 August 1917 the British Government prepared to meet the situation that had developed during the war and that was likely to develop further in the post-war years with a new Declaration of Policy, which, as Palme Dutt has observed, "has since been regarded as the keystone of modern imperialist constitutional policy"[2] The Secretary of State for India declared :

> "The policy of His Majesty's Government...is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the *gradual* development of self-governing institutions with a view to the *progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Fmpire*. . I would add that *progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages*. The British Government and the Government of India...must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance..."[3]

In 1917, a die-hard imperialist like Lord Curzon, a member of the British cabinet and former Viceroy of India, held that "if the Government does not take charge of the operation, someone else will...and there may easily grow up a disaffection that would soon become dangerous."[4]

As we shall see, the Congress strategy, which Bipan Chandra has described as the P-C-P (Pressure-Compromise-Pressure) strategy, was the counterpart of the British imperial strategy. It too wanted to proceed along the "constitutional" or "peaceful and legitimate" path, sought devolution of power by successive stages and helped the raj to isolate and suppress both ideologically and politically the revolutionary forces, which Gandhi repeatedly denounced as "the forces of violence", "the unruly elements" and "the rabble".

In 1929 Viceroy Lord Irwin also felt that the "real question" was "whether all this Indian nationalism that is growing and bound to grow, can be guided along imperial or will more and more get deflected into separatist lines."[5] Like the raj, Gandhi and his lieutenants saw to it that 'Indian nationalism' was not 'deflected into separatist lines.' As the interests of imperialist capital and those of comprador capital coalesced in the main, there was no fundamental difference between their political objectives in respect of the future of India. The political representatives of the big comprador bourgeoisie and its ally—the class of big landlords—hungered for political collaboration with the raj to suppress "the unruly elements" and to obtain in lieu of service some concessions from the raj—"partnership on absolutely equal terms," as the mahatma with his verbal wizardry put it repeatedly.

G. D. Birla writes that when he saw Viceroy-designate Lord Linlithgow in London on 2 July 1935, Linlithgow told him that Gandhi would have to choose between two roads—"A road of personal contact, friendship and evolution through it or a bolder step of disturbance and disorder spread over a number of years which may give liberty or may result in a setback." *Birla unhesitatingly replied that, like him, Gandhi "desired association and friendliness."* He produced a copy of Gandhi's letter to Agatha Harrison as a proof.[6] Gandhi advised him to "*continue to exert yourself as you have been doing already.*"[7]

It is usually assumed that Gandhi entered the stage of Indian politics and inaugurated a new era—an era of mass action to liberate India from the imperialist yoke; that it marked a turning-point, a complete departure from the past when the Congress had relied mainly on prayers and petitions to achieve its ends. Nehru wrote in his usual, high-falutin style: "Crushed in the dark misery of the present, she [India] had tried to find relief in helpless muttering and in vague dreams of the past and the future, but he [Gandhi] came and gave hope to her mind and strength to her much-battered body, and the future became an alluring vision."[8] This high-flown eulogy of Gandhi is a blatant attempt to misrepresent and falsify the long history of our people's resistance to colonial rule and to build a myth—a kind of veil to hide the sordidness of the policy of the Congress leadership.

Gandhi, the disciple of Gokhale, displayed strong faith in prayers and petitions and personal contacts in South Africa, and this faith remained undimmed until 1947. In 1917, on the occasion of the visit to India of Secretary of State Fdwin Montagu, he organized as 'a British subject of Gujarat' a campaign for submitting a petition to Montagu praying for the introduction of 'the Swaraj scheme' as embodied in the Congress-League pact of 1916. It was he who drafted the petition and it was his idea that 'the whole of India should take up the petition.'[9] He was also a member of the deputation that waited on Montagu and Viceroy Chelmsford and had several separate interviews with them.[10] Gandhi's life-long correspondence and personal contacts, sometimes direct and sometimes indirect through intermediaries like G. D. Birla and members of the India Conciliation Group in London, with the highest British authorities are an eloquent testimony to his strong faith in the efficacy of prayers, petitions and personal approach It is no wonder that he strongly believed in the change of heart of the raj for, as we have noted, there was no fundamental difference between what the Congress leadership aspired to and what the raj was prepared *ultimately* to give. To quote Rajendra Prasad, Gandhi's close associate, who became the President of India's Constituent Assembly and adorned the office of the President of India for twelve years,

"Of course, Britain never deprecated that ideal of ours [achievement of 'independence'] and in fact, she agreed that independence was the ultimate aim of her policy. She only pleaded that India and the other colonies were not at that time fit to govern themselves and that, therefore, she considered it her *duty* to retain in her hands the responsibility of governing them and preparing them for the ultimate self-government. We, Indians, did not accept this position and that was the cause of our conflict with Britain."[11] So according to such Congress stalwarts, the conflict was not over the goal but over the timing of their 'tryst with destiny.'

Not surprisingly, the *main* methods the Congress leadership wanted to adopt to attain their goal were discussion, negotiation, persuasion and 'gentlemanly understanding.' As Gandhi said, "when that freedom comes, if it ever does, it will have come through a gentlemanly understanding with Great Britain."[12] To quote him again, "If India is to come to her own through conference and consultation, the goodwill and active help of Englishmen are absolutely necessary."[13] Presiding at the Karachi Congress at the end of March 1931, Vallabhbhai Patel echoed Gandhi : "If India is to reach her independence through consultation and agreement, it is reasonable to suppose that there will be British association."[14] On 13 September 1938 Gandhi wrote to Carl Heath of the India Conciliation Group : "Whatever has to happen, will happen as a result of negotiations between parties."[15] Speaking of Chittaranjan Das, Abul Kalam Azad approvingly wrote : "He held that if India was to win her freedom through negotiations, we must be prepared to achieve it step by step. Independence could not come all of a sudden where the method followed was that of discussion and persuasion."[16] In an article "Congress Ministries," Gandhi wrote that the formation of Congress ministries in several provinces in 1937 would provide an opportunity to "the two parties"—the Congress ministers and the raj's officials—to "meet together, each with its own history, background and goal *to convert one another* . . If the Englishmen or Anglicized Indians can but see the Indian which is the Congress viewpoint, the battle is won by the Congress and complete independence will come to us without shedding a drop of blood."[17]

Great men proverbially think alike. On 22 July 1937, almost at the same time when the mahatma was writing the above lines, G. D. Birla saw Winston Churchill, the Tory leader, at his house. To quote Birla, "Immediately on seeing me, he [Churchill] said, 'Well, a big experiment has begun' and when I said, 'Yes, it has begun but it will require all your sympathy and good wishes,' he assured me of it but all the same said, 'It depends entirely on you.... *if you can make* *this experiment a success, you will reach your goal automatically.... Play fair and we will play fair."* [18]

"The big experiment," though interrupted by World War II and the Congress leadership's reaction to it, succeeded in convincing the raj of its *bona fides*. Except for a brief interlude of a few months in 1942, during which the dominant section of the leadership tried to put pressure on the British to quit India in anticipation of a victorious Japanese march into India and a possible agreement with them, the Congress leaders played quite fair, exerted their utmost to suppress the struggles of the workers, peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie, men of the armed forces and the police, and proved worthy of the mantle of the raj in a divided India enjoying first the status of a British dominion and then that of a member of the British Commonwealth.

But the objective situation in the post-World War I years was such that, despite Gandhi and his close associates, the main methods of discussion, negotiation and persuasion had to be *supplemented* by limited, controlled mass action which the great leaders intensely disliked. Though the political objective and outlook of Gandhi were the same as those of the Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other 'liberals' with whom he felt his political kinship,[19] yet he sometimes felt compelled to deviate from the 'constitutional path' to which they strictly adhered, for he was more astute and more flexible in his tactics that they were. The new situation demanded new tactics, and Gandhi and the new leadership emerged to adjust the methods to the new circumstances.

As we shall see in some of the chapters that follow, non-violent non co-operation or civil disobedience was Gandhi's tactic which was forced upon him by circumstances at certain critical moments of India's history. As he made it clear on the eve of launching every such movement, it was not the dog that wagged the tail but the tail that wagged the dog. Non-violent non-co-operation or civil disobedience, hedged in by all conceivable restrictions, was designed by Gandhi as a device, a kind of safety-valve, which would allow the people's wrath to find vent through it without upsetting the imperialist apple-cart. The aim, as he repeatedly pointed out, was not to embarrass the alien rulers but to bring about through "self-suffering" a change of heart in the rulers. It was conversion, change of heart, of the imperial power through personal contact, negotiation and persuasion or through self-suffering, that was aimed at. Whenever the movements outstepped the limits set by the Congress leadership and caused real anxiety to the rulers, they were abruptly withdrawn, bringing in their wake demoralization and fratricidal strife.

The primary aim of the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919, the Non-co-operation movement of 1920-2 and the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-1, as Gandhi planned them, was to forestall or divert and derail mass anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggles which he apprehended. As he repeatedly stated, *by* initiating such a movement he sought to "sterilize the forces of violence" that might prove a threat to the raj and its domestic allies. The secondary aim was to secure some concessions for the domestic exploiting classes by demonstrating the leadership's ability to control the masses and to protect the vital imperialist interests.

Non-violent non-co-operation or civil disobedience was regarded by Gandhi as some kind of deviation from the normal course, his main strategy, which was one of co-operation, prayer and negotiation. To him, such limited mass action was an aberration, an evil, which he tried by all means to avert but which became necessary in certain situations in the long-range interests of the classes he and his chief lieutenants represented. Here we shall briefly touch on this point which has been elaborated in Chapters V and VIII.

Before launching the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi assured his friends that his purpose was to forestall revolutionary violence of "the growing generation."[20] Again and again he pointed out that his satyagraha sought to prevent the violent activities of "the ambitious and high-spirited youths."[21] He assured the raj before initiating the non-co-operation movement that the movement, as he proposed, would be "*not anti-English...not even anti-Government.*" He affirmed : "To do nothing is to invite violence for a certainty. . the only way to avoid violence is to enable them [the people] to give such expression to their feelings as to compel redress. I have found nothing save non-co-operation. It is logical and *harmless*". He explained that one of his purposes was "to transform ill will into affection for the British and their constitution."[22]

To see that his movements were "harmless" to the raj, Gandhi preached : "A civil resister is...a philanthropist and *a friend of the State*....civil disobedience is the purest type of constitutional agitation."[23] He warned : "we dare not pin our faith solely to civil disobedience. It is like the use of a knife to be used most sparingly *if at all*....We must, therefore, give its full and, therefore, greater value to the adjective 'civil' than to 'disobedience'. Disobedience without civility, discipline, discrimination, non-violence is certain destruction."[24] He warned : "Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience, one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the State laws."[25] Quite often he expatiated on the *voluntary, regular obedience* to the laws, even unjust laws, and on *perfect loyalty to the State* as a condition for participation in his movements. To quote him, "It is only after one has voluntarily obeyed such laws [laws of the State, a thousand times that an occasion rightly comes to one civilly to disobey certain laws. Nor is it necessary for voluntary obedience that the laws to be obeyed must be good.'"[26] "Civil disobedience," Gandhi preached, "is therefore based upon love and fellow-feeling whereas criminal disobedience upon hatred and ill will."[27]

As Gandhi envisaged, non-co-operation was a means to an end : the end was co-operation, not severance of relations, with imperialism. In July 1921, during the non-co-operation movement, he asserted that "non-co-operation is the only effective step towards co-operation".[28] He never tired of emphasizing this.[29]

Immediately after his release from prison in early February 1924, Gandhi wrote that if his programme, which prescribed promotion of "unity between the races", plying of the *charkha*, the removal of untouchability and "the application of non-violence in thought, word and deed to our methods", was carried out, "we need *never* resort to civil disobedience and I should hope that it will *never* be necessary."[30] He spoke in the same vein on many other occasions.[31]

In September 1924 Gandhi affirmed :

"I know that non-co-operation was a dangerous experiment. *Non-co-operation in itself is unnatural, vicious and sinful.* But non-violent non-co-operation, I am convinced, is a sacred duty at times... *Non-violent non-co-operation was the only alternative to anarchy and worse.*"[82]

The mahatma rightly pointed out that his "*non-co-operation is co-operation in essence.*"[83] He repeatedly declared that he was "dying to co-operate" with British imperialism.[84]

Before the civil disobedience movement was launched, Gandhi expressed more than once his craving for "true heart co-operation" with the raj.[85]

Addressing English friends in *Young India* of 23 January 1930, Gandhi stated :

"The conviction has deepened in me that civil disobedience alone can stop the bursting of that fury [hatred and ill will]....And *British officials, if they choose, may regulate civil disobedience so as to sterilize the forces of violence.*"[86]

The second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement started in the beginning of 1932. But the Congress leaders were neither prepared for it nor did they want it. Despite Gandhi's repeated declarations made in London and on his return to India after the second Round Table Conference had failed that he was "determined to make every effort to continue co-operation"[87], the movement was rather thrust upon the Congress leaders by Viceroy Willingdon, who, on his own admission, was emerging in India as a second Mussolini.[88] Willingdon, who had made elaborate arrangements for suppressing the movement, rudely rebuffed Gandhi's prayers for an interview and for 'guidance' from him. Even later the mahatma's repeated requests for personal contact and negotiation met with devastating replies from New Delhi's Mussolini.

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 belonged to a different category. The reasons which impelled Gandhi to threaten the British Government with it have been discussed in *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*[89] and we shall return to it later.

The following from G. D. Birla's letter of 8 March 1940 to Mahadev Desai is interesting :

"You know I hate civil disobedience. In the name of non-violence it has encouraged violence....But if this psychology continues, any Government even our own, would become an impossibility....Hence my dread at anything that will lead us towards a mass movement. . Hence my horror at any talk of civil disobedience."[40]

In reply, Gandhi's devoted secretary wrote :

"Assuming that all that you say about C.D. is true...do you suggest that violence would be better than civil disobedience however inadequate ?...Human nature with all its weaknesses must have some medium of giving vent to its protest, and if you deprive oppressed humanity of even civil disobedience you deprive it of all it has..."[41]

Again, Mahadev Desai wrote to Birla : "The fact is that suffering humanity needs a catharsis for its pent-up feelings. And Bapu is busy perfecting just that device..."[42]

This 'catharsis' or safety-valve theory was stressed by Gandhi also. Earlier, on 19 March 1931, when the date for the executions of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were announced, Home Secretary Emerson asked for Gandhi's help to contain the disorder that the government apprehended. "Gandhi promised to do what he could."[43] Next day, the Home Secretary informed him of a meeting of protest that was going to be held in Delhi that evening under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose and again sought his assistance.[44] While assuring Emerson that he had "already taken every precaution possible", the mahatma gave him his expert advice that "there should be no display of police force and no interference at the meeting. *Irritation* is undoubtedly there. *It would be better to allow it to find vent through meetings, etc*".[45]

Satyagraha

Gandhi, wrote Jawaharlal, "was superb in his special field of Satyagrahic direct action, and his instinct unerringly led him to take the right steps"[46] "Gandhi's supreme invention, discovery or creation", remarks a learned scholar, "was satyagraha....It was in a sense another name for war with an alien government."[47]

To understand the nature of "Satyagrahic direct action" or of this form of 'war with an alien government", it would perhaps be helpful if we depend on Gandhi's own writings and speeches. The following brief extracts from them will, we hope, help us in appreciating the different aspects of the mahatma's "supreme invention, discovery or creation."

1 "A satyagrahi does not inflict pain on the adversary; he does not seek his destruction....Satyagraha is pure soul-force.... The soul is informed with knowledge. In it burns the flame of love."[48]

2 "Satyagraha [different from passive resistance] postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person."[49]

3 "Satyagraha...is essentially a religious movement. It is a process of purification and penance. It seeks to secure reforms or redress of grievances by self-suffering."[50]

4 "Satyagraha is search for Truth; and God is Truth....I have repeatedly stated that satyagraha never fails and that one perfect satyagrahi is enough to vindicate Truth."[51]

5 [While giving evidence on 9 January 1920 before the Disorders Inquiry Committee appointed by the Government of India after the Rowlatt satyagraha, the Jallianwala Bag massacre, the operations of the Martial Law and so on, Gandhi said in reply to Lord Hunter, its president :]

"It [satyagraha] is a movement intended to replace methods of violence...It is, as I have conceived it, *an extension of the domestic law on the political field*, and my experience has led me to the conclusion that *that movement and that movement alone can rid India of the possibilities of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land for the redress of grievances, supposed and real*....I wish I could disabuse the committee really of this attitude that it is a dangerous campaign. *If you will conceive the campaign as designed in order to rid the country of the school of violence, then you will share the same concern that I have that, at any cost, a movement of this character should remain in the country and purify it certainly*."[52] It seems that in the "war with an alien government" the mahatma seeks its intelligent support.

6 [In reply to Lord Hunter, Gandhi stated :] "..he [a

satyagrahi] helps the authorities and the police by making the people more law-abiding and more respectful to authority."[53]

7 "...boycott [of foreign goods except foreign cloth] was totally inconsistent with satyagraha. *Satyagraha in the political field is an extension of the law that governs the members of a family.*"[54]

8 "Anyone who is permeated by satyagraha filled with religious emotion would melt the hearts of people even in jail. If we are thus made, the closer we come to the British, the more we would be able to persuade them."[55]

9 "Remember what I have often said, 'One real satyagrahi is enough for victory'."[56]

10 "A soldier of an army does not know the whole of the military science; so also does a satyagrahi not know the whole science of satyagraha. *It is enough if he trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy.* They [the satyagrahis] must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation."[57]

11 "Time may show that neither India nor the world can have anything better than *satyagraha as a restraining force and a force ranged on the side of law and order.*"[58]

12 "The hold that satyagraha has gained on the people—it may be even against their will—is curbing the forces of disorder and violence."[59]

13 "...*if we ourselves become pure and just, how can anyone oppress us? It is a wrong policy to fight the oppressor.* The right course is to suffer, to *bear his ill-treatment without submitting to his injustice.*"[60]

14 "If I can but induce the nation to accept satyagraha if only as a predominant factor in life, whether social or political, we need have no fear of the Bolshevik propaganda."[61]

What, then, are the features of the mahatma's superb "Satyagrahic direct action" when it is practised in the political sphere, that is, when an enslaved and oppressed people seeks to liberate itself from the fetters of imperialist rule?

First, satyagraha is a religious movement: the oppressed and exploited people should undertake penance and purify their hearts.

so that the flame of love for the oppressors who grind them into dust may burn brightly in them.

Second, with their hearts warm with love for the imperialists and the native oppressors, the enslaved people should inflict more suffering on themselves to convert their "so-called" enemies—the imperialists, capitalists and landlords - into their friends.

Third, if the oppressed people themselves become pure and just, nobody will be able to oppress them. It is a wrong policy to fight the oppressor.

Fourth, the satyagrahi must be in the habit of rendering faithful and willing obedience to the laws, even "irksome" ones, of the colonial State. Only on "occasions, generally rare", the satyagrahi civilly breaks certain laws and "quietly suffers the penalty for their breach."

Fifth, the end of satyagraha is "heart co-operation" with the imperialist enslavers. According to Gandhi, a satyagrahi "does not let slip a single opportunity for a settlement."[62]

Sixth, the demands for which a satyagraha was started by Gandhi were always pitched very low.[63] These were such that the satyagraha kept the door open for a compromise with imperialism and were never intended to harm its vital interests. Besides, Gandhi sought to debar the masses from playing any active role in the satyagraha campaigns. He would repeatedly declaim that satyagraha knew no defeat (though it *never* succeeded in fulfilling its *ostensible* objects whether in South Africa or in India)[64] and that even the satyagraha of one true satyagrahi on behalf of the entire people of the sub-continent was sure to be crowned with victory.

Seventh, instead of being "a war with an alien government", satyagraha was a crusade against the revolutionary people. While it was intended by Gandhi to promote love and trust, instead of distrust that then existed, between the rulers and the ruled and to make the latter "more law-abiding and more respectful to authority", its main purpose was to eliminate "the possibilities of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land" as a method of struggle against the raj. Gandhi wanted the alien rulers to appreciate the beauty of satyagraha and to support it. To put down the revolutionary violence of the people, the mahatma had no hesitation in uniting with the alien rulers who always used unbridled violence to keep the people under subjection. "Let the readers say what they like and the Government strive its utmost," said Gandhi, "unless they and we, all of us, strengthen the forces of satyagraha, the methods of violence are bound automatically to gain ascendancy."[66]

Eighth, satyagraha demanded that all satyagrahis should unquestioningly carry out all the commands of the leader who alone knew the art and science of satyagraha, and should render to him "heart discipline" without any mental reservation. That is, every such movement would place dictatorial powers in the hands of the mahatma who claimed to be "an expert in satyagraha business."

Gandhi, who dominated the Congress for about two decades and a half and controlled various other organizations, was an eminently practical man. One must see through the veil of idealism and higher morality, the religious veneer, to appreciate the real meaning of Gandhi's *mantra* of satyagraha.

Gandhi was not so naive as to believe that imperialism had a heart the hardness of which would melt at the display of love and infliction of self-suffering by the enslaved people. Besides, he had his own experience. Botha, Smuts, Chelmsford, Reading, Irwin, Willingdon, Linlithgow, Ramsay MacDonald, Samuel Hoare, Winston Churchill and others of their ilk, with whom he had contacts—direct or indirect—, some of whom he claimed as his friends, were hardly converted from adversaries into friends of the Indian people by the exhibition of his love for and loyalty to them. What the mahatma aimed at accomplishing and succeeded to an extent in doing by his device of satyagraha was emasculation of the anti-imperialist militancy of the people and spread of confusion among them. Satyagraha was an ideal technique with which he tried to forestall revolutionary movements or tame and divert them when they had already broken out.

The following entry in Romain Rolland's diary is interesting. During a conversation between Rabindranath and Rolland and his two friends, Rabindranath "dwells on his [Gandhi's] variations and contradictions, the compromises he has accepted, and that sort of secret bad faith which makes him prove to himself by *sophistries* that the decisions he takes are those demanded by virtue and the divine law even when the contrary is true and he must be aware of the fact."[66]

One may not forget that religious and moral sermons or sophistries have also a class character. As Lenin said,

"People always were and always will be the stupid victims of deceit and self-deceit in politics until they learn to discover the *interests* of some class behind all moral, religious, political, and social phrases, declarations and promises."[67]

Gandhi's satyagraha, no doubt, served best the interests of the big bourgeoisie and the big landlords and those of the raj—the domestic and foreign interests that coalesced. (See Chap. 4, Section 1 below for more on Satyagraha).

A 'World-Regenerating' Creed

"Non-violence", Gandhi would say, "is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."[68] He never ceased to claim that he was a great "votary" of non-violence, the "*acharya* of the science of non-violence." "The greatest contribution of Gandhiji to world thought", said Jawaharlal Nehru in his usual flamboyant style, "is non-violence."[69]

The transfer of power in 1947 has been hailed as a non-violent revolution under the leadership of Gandhi.[70] It is claimed that this path-finder blazed a new path along which the oppressed peoples of the world might march towards freedom from national and class exploitation and oppression. The mahatma is acclaimed as a Christ-like man who taught mankind how to combat violence with non-violence, as the world leader who showed how to transform this world weary of hatred, violence and war into a new world where love would heal all strife between nations and nations and between classes and classes.

In the following string of quotations from Gandhi's writings and speeches, we depend on him to throw light on his doctrine of non-violence and its many facets :

1 "Non-violence is love.....Love has no play as between

friends and relatives. These love one another from selfishness, not from enlightenment. It has play only as between opponents so-called. It demands, therefore, the highest charity and all the chivalry one is capable of showing towards those who oppose or persecute one."[71]

2 "...our non-violence teaches us to love our enemies. By non-violent non-co-operation we seek to conquer the wrath of the English administrators and their supporters."[72]

3 "True ahimsa lay in running into the mouth of himsa. If cows could be credited with intelligence, it is conceivable that given a sufficient number of such cows, who would run into the tiger's mouth, the latter would lose the relish for cow flesh and would change his nature."[73]

4 "My life is dedicated to service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism.'"[74]

5 "He did not want the nation to adopt the path of non-violence out of weakness. The non-violence which he wanted the nation to follow was really the weapon of the strong."[75]

6 "In the programme of non-violence, we must rigidly exclude the idea of gaining anything by embarrassing the Government."[76]

7 "I am yet ignorant of what Bolshevism is....But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me....I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes."[77]

8 "Let them [the war resisters in Europe] understand me to be uncompromisingly against all war....This I know that if India comes to her own demonstrably through non-violent means, India will never want to carry a vast army, an equally grand navy and a grander air force."[78]

9 "From the standpoint of non-violent non-co-operation, it [the boycott of British goods] seems to me to be wholly indefensible. It is retaliation pure and simple and, as such, punitive."[79]

10 "The programme [of the Swaraj Party] of obstruction [in the legislatures] has a strong smell of violence about it..."[80]

11 "I fully agree that 'Down with the Union Jack' smells of violence. There are several other objectionable cries that have come into vogue."[81]

12 "We must not resort to social boycott of our opponents. It amounts to coercion."[82]

13 "An employee who gives himself leave [that is, ceases work for the day to observe some *hartal*] uses violence, *for* he commits a criminal breach of the contract of his service....All he can do is to resign if he is not satisfied with his employer. But this too a body of employees may not do all of a sudden."[83]

14 "...to prevent the workers from going to their work by standing in front of them is pure violence and must be given up. The owners of mills or other factories would be fully justified in invoking the assistance of the police..."[84]

15 "The weapon of fasting, I know, cannot be lightly wielded. It can easily savour of violence unless it is used by one skilled in the art. I claim to be such an artist in this subject."[85]

It may be noted that the Congress Working Committee, meeting in the middle of June 1934, denounced confiscation of private property and class struggle as contrary to the creed of non-violence.

Writing in *Harijan* of 8 October 1938, after the Munich Pact had been signed, Gandhi observed that if the Czechs "had known the use of non-violence as a weapon for the defence of national honour, they would have faced the whole might of Germany with that of Italy thrown in....to save their honour they would have died to a man without shedding the blood of the robber."[86]

In November 1938 he advised the German Jews to "offer satyagraha" : he was "convinced that, if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope."[87]

In December of the same year, Gandhi regretted before a group of American and British missionaries that "when the time for testing her active non-violence came, China failed in that test....When the position is examined in terms of non-violence, I must say it is unbecoming for a nation of 400 millions, a nation as cultured as Japan, to repel Japanese aggression by resorting to Japan's own methods." What was his prescription ? He advised the Chinese to "say to Japan, 'Bring your machinery [of destruction], we present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions won't bend their knee to you.' If the Chinese did that, Japan would become China's slave." He added : "If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, a time will come when he will have had more than surfeit."[88] The mahatma was sure that, after devouring two hundred million Chinese, Japan's aggressive appetite would reach a point of satiety, Japanese imperialism would cease to be imperialism, and victory would belong to the Chinese.

In his appeal "To Every Briton" in July 1940, when most of Western Europe lay at the feet of the Nazi hordes and when his faith in Britain's victory was thoroughly shaken,[89] Gandhi, who had offered the British on the outbreak of the war unconditional co-operation, urged them to lay down their arms, surrender to Hitler and Mussolini and to uphold the ideal of non-violence. While offering this advice, Gandhi claimed that he had been "practising with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years."[90]

Though it may sound heretical, the mahatma's life-long practice seems to belie this claim. Facts suggest that he was a practitioner of violence or upheld violence in practice, though not in words, from the beginning of his political life in South Africa to the end of his days.

It is perfectly true that Gandhi was consistent in insisting on strict observance of non-violence *in thought, word and deed* in the struggles of the people against the British raj and against the native landlords, princes and capitalists. But when the interests of British imperialism and of the domestic exploiting classes were threatened, he was never squeamish about the use of violence to defend their interests and never hesitated to reject his creed of non-violence in favour of violence.

Gandhi's participation in the Boer War in 1899 and in the British war of suppression of the Zulus in South Africa in 1906 is well-known. Later, he wrote with a tinge of pride : "I was in charge of the Indian Ambulance Corps consisting of 1,100 men during the Boer campaign....I was specially mentioned in General

Buller's despatches....I was in charge of a similar corps...of 90 Indians at the time of the Zulu campaign in 1906, and I was specially thanked by the then Government of Natal."[91] Expecting to obtain some concession from the authorities, Gandhi took part in the Britishers' war against the Boers and against the innocent Zulus who were being mowed down in their own homes by the British. Significantly, he wrote: "The rightness or otherwise of the 'rebellion' was therefore not likely to affect my decision."[92] His conscience was never troubled by such unimportant questions. Rather, he participated in the wars which he knew to be unjust. Such support to the imperialist cause has been represented by Western and Eastern writers as evidence of Gandhi's higher morality. To quote, for instance, Van Den Dungen: "...hence when a crisis such as the Boer War (1899) arose Gandhi, *with his highly developed moral faculty*, could submerge his personal sympathies and argue that those who claimed rights must be prepared to accept the corresponding duties. ...As before, Gandhi submerged his personal feelings regarding the Zulu revolt..."[93] No doubt, the mahatma's "highly developed moral faculty" remained unimpaired to the very end.

To resume the story. Reaching London when World War I broke out, Gandhi sought and received the approval of the Secretary of State for India and raised an ambulance corps of 100 Indians to serve in the imperialist war. He also received training but an unfortunate attack of pleurisy did not allow him to render active service. Urged by the Under-Secretary of State, he returned to India in January 1915 and offered his services to Viceroy Lord Hardinge, who assured him that "his presence in India itself at that critical time would be of more service than any that he might be able to render abroad." He renewed his offer to the Bombay Governor.[94] Attending the War Conference, convened by the Viceroy, on 28 April 1918, he said: "I consider myself honoured to find my name among the supporters of this resolution [on recruitment of soldiers for the British Indian Army]. I realize fully its meaning and tender my support to it with all my heart."[95] In his letter of 30 April, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy's private secretary: "...if I became your recruiting agent-in-chief, I might rain men on you."[96] He did become a recruiting sergeant and, while "recruiting mad," he wrote to Sir Surendranath Banerjea that he wanted a party in the country one of the tasks of which would be to help the government "in the prosecution of the war."[97]

The mahatma who denounced "the crimes of Chauri-Chaura" and discontinued the non-co-operation movement in early 1922 for the sake of his creed of non-violence, did not hesitate in 1918 to call for 'twenty recruits from every village' to serve as cannon-fodder to defend the empire.

It is worth mentioning that at a public meeting held at Dhaka on 15 December 1920, Gandhi declared: "We will use swords, when the time will come. He who does not draw the sword at the proper time is a fool and he who uses his sword at an improper time is also impudent".[98] At that moment Gandhi seems to have been wooing the revolutionaries of Bengal.

Instead of proposing that there should be no army, police and prison in the India of his dreams, Gandhi appreciated the need for them. In *Young India* of 7 May 1925, this tireless preacher of non-violence wrote that "in my swaraj of today there is room for soldiers....*I preach, therefore, non-violence restricted strictly to the purpose of winning our freedom* and, therefore, *perhaps* for preaching the regulation of international relations by non-violent means."[99] So, Gandhi's world-regenerating creed of non-violence had a restricted application: it was intended to regulate the response of the Indian people to the exploitation and oppression by British rulers.

The Karachi Congress resolution on "Fundamental Rights and Duties and Economic Programme", as modified in early August 1931, stated: "The State [under "the Swaraj Government"] shall provide for the military training of citizens so as to organize a means of national defence apart from the regular military forces."[100]

What Gandhi said at the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference in London on 17 November 1931 is quite significant. While demanding "that the Army should pass under our control," he stated: "That Army will not accept my command....I know that the British Commander-in-Chief will not accept my command; nor would the Sikhs, nor the proud Rajputs—none of them would accept my command. But I expect, even so, to exercise that command with the goodwill of the British people, that they will be there at the time of transferring the command to teach a new lesson to these very soldiers, and to tell them that they are after all serving their own countrymen if they do so. *British troops may also be told*: 'Now is the time for you not to remain here to protect British interests and British lives, but *you are here to protect India against foreign aggression, even against internal insurrection*...That is my dream."[101]

The beauty of it all was that, at the same time, the mahatma was quite categorical that his "*marriage with non-violence is such an absolute thing* that I would rather commit suicide than be deflected from my position."[102]

Significant also was Gandhi's attitude towards the Garhwali soldiers who braving the risk of court-martial and consequent death, transportation for life or long terms of imprisonment, refused to fire on unarmed anti-imperialist demonstrators at Peshawar in April 1930. They disobeyed the orders of their British officers to fire on and kill their countrymen, were court-martialled and meted out savage sentences.[103]

Characteristically, the Congress Working Committee, meeting at Allahabad from 12 to 15 May 1930, did not even mention in its resolutions this great patriotic act. Nor did the meeting of the Working Committee, held on 27 August 1930.[104] Pandit Jawaharlal tried to minimize the heroism of the Garhwali soldiers as much as it was possible for him to do.[105] One remembers in this context that, during a discussion, Pandit Motilal urged Indian Army officers to remain loyal to the British until the day of independence came,[106] that is, till power would be transferred to their friendly hands.

The Irwin-Gandhi agreement of 5 March 1931, that discontinued the Civil Disobedience Movement, was quite explicit. The clause on release of political prisoners stated:

"Soldiers and police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders...will not come within the scope of the amnesty."[107]

In reply to questions in October 1931 in London, Gandhi said: "The Garhwali prisoners...deliberately disobeyed their orders. I agree that it was a non-violent action on their part, but it was also a gross breach of discipline by those who had taken *an oath* to carry out the commands of their officers."[109] To the mahatma, the Garhwali soldiers' "*crime*"[109] in refusing to carry out an order of the alien rulers to kill and maim unarmed countrymen far outweighed their patriotic act, which was among the bravest and most unselfish acts. He refused to sign a manifesto, sent him by Fenner Brockway, demanding their release.[110] "A soldier," Gandhi said to a French journalist, "who disobeys an order to fire breaks *the oath* which he has taken and renders himself *guilty of criminal disobedience*. I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power, I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers."[111]

Did the mahatma really attach such sanctity to an oath? What price was a soldier's oath to him when a section of the Indian big bourgioisie was waiting in the months of 1942 to welcome the Japanese imperialists? Speaking at the AICC meeting on 8 August 1942, the mahatma asked Indian soldiers not to resign their posts, not to leave the army, but to tell the government: "We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people."[112]

In truth, Gandhi and his lieutenants were never squeamish about violating an oath. During colonial rule members of the legislatures, ministers and members of the Viceroy's Executive Council had to swear allegiance to the British rulers. The following resolution on "Oath of Allegiance", *a formula devised by Gandhi*, was adopted by the Congress Working Committee in March 1937: "As doubts have been raised regarding the propriety of taking the oath of allegiance, the Working Committee wishes to declare that the taking of that oath, in order to enable participation in the work of the legislatures, in no way lessens or varies the demand for independence [sic !]..."[113] So Gandhi's lieutenants including Nehru, Patel and Prasad, could take their oaths and break them—without feeling much remorse. But it would not be wrong if one argued that the violations were more apparent than real.

The Congress ministries which functioned in many provinces from 1937 to 1939 "had not been able", as Rajendra Prasad admitted, "to carry on the administration purely on the principle of *ahimsa*. They had sometimes resorted to firing to quell riots [i.e., protest demonstrations staged by the masses against the policies of Congress governments]. The police and the jails were in tact."[114]

Justifying the lathi charges, firings, etc., on the workers and peasants, the prophet of non-violence observed :

"...our Ministers have had to resort to violence even as the British Government in the pre-autonomy days. *It was inevitable perhaps*....A Minister said the other day that although he had not given up an iota of non-violence he could not do without resorting to the minimum of firing. He had resorted to it only to the extent that it was *unavoidable*."[115]

On the outbreak of World War II Gandhi wanted the Congress to *offer* unconditional co-operation to Britain's war efforts. Consigning Congress resolutions and their rhetorical speeches on war of the preceding months and years to the waste-paper basket, Nehru and Patel also wanted to help the raj in waging the war. This is also what G. D. Birla wanted the Congress leadership to do,[116] for the war was expected to usher in the best of times for the big bourgeoisie. But sensing the mood of the people and embarrassed by the militant line struck by Subhas who, though expelled from the Congress, attended the meeting of the Congress Working Committee on invitation, the Working Committee asked the British government to clarify its war-aims (as if imperialism's war-aims needed clarification) and decided to support Britain's war efforts provided its war-aims agreed with the aspirations of the Congress leadership. Gandhi told the Working Committee that "there should be no obstruction nor non-co-operation, and that ministers should carry on to the extent that it was possible and offer co-operation in all respects in which they could do so conscientiously...all things considered the best policy would be to help and not to hinder."[117] Later, he said that "had the Congress appreciated the position I took up [exactly the same as that of G. D. Birla] Congress support would have been unconditional in the sense that the Congress would not have asked for a clarification of Britain's war aims."[118] While reasserting in a statement on 15 September that "whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally", he did not forget to add: "This could only be done on a purely non-violent basis."[119] This talk of supporting unconditionally—helping, not hindering—a most violent war "on a purely non-violent basis" was a piece of the mahatma's usual, bold casuistry.

On 18 September, Gandhi's devoted secretary Mahadev Desai wrote to Birla: "Heaven alone knows what is in store for us. But the principle of non-violence by which we have been swearing these 20 years seems to be under a heavy eclipse."[120] And Rajendra Prasad said: "At the Working Committee session it became clear that, *though wedded to non-violence*, the Congress could not refuse to help the British and, if the occasion demanded it, *it would not desist from helping them with men and arms*."[121] Prasad conceded that "The war had rendered our faith in *ahimsa* somewhat flexible which was but natural."[122] In fact, it was always flexible except when the interests of the raj and of the domestic exploiting classes were involved.

Gandhi's creed of 'non-violence' went through several twists and turns during the war years. During these years his stand changed according to changes in the tide of the war. His early unconditional co-operation with Britain in its war changed to refusal to give it in about mid-1940, and he became rigid in upholding non-violence when the Allied powers suffered severe reverses on the Western front. A majority of Congress Working Committee members hoped that Britain's difficulties after the fall of Holland and France would persuade it to relent and make concessions to them. So they preferred to make "a distinction," to quote Azad's words, "between an internal struggle for freedom and an external struggle against aggression,"[123] held that the doctrine of non-violence was applicable to an "internal struggle" but not to an "external" one, and offered their co-operation in Britain's war efforts provided concessions were made. To the great leaders of the Congress, the Indian people's fight against the long-time British aggressor was an 'internal struggle', in the course of which the Indian people must remain non-violent in thought, word and deed, while Hitler's war in

Europe was an aggression against India, which must be repelled by all means including violent ones. But non-violence had its precious uses in the "internal struggle" *only* against the British raj—not against Indian workers and peasants, as the experience of the Congress leaders during 1937-9 demonstrated. Gandhi, who had by this time become a strict adherent of his creed, chose to be relieved of his responsibility as the leader. But soon the hope of obtaining concessions proved a mirage, and he was again saddled with his usual responsibility.[124]

By the beginning of 1942 Gandhi, certain about the victory of the Axis Powers over Britain and its allies, adopted a stand which was again "flexible". On 15 January 1942, the opening day of the AICC session at Wardha, he "urged complete support for [the] Bardoli resolution,"[125] and said that "non-violence was [a] political weapon in [the] hands of Congress *that could be relied on and wielded at times and discarded at times.*" But "he himself would not have swaraj at [the] cost of non-violence."[126] That was the way of the mahatma: he would sometimes like to preserve his own chastity while advising others to discard it.

On 14 July 1942, at the instance of Gandhi, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution which stated that the Congress "desires to build resistance to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign power" and that, if the Congress demand was met, it was "agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India..."[127] The 'Quit India' resolution, sponsored by Gandhi and adopted by the AICC on 8 August 1942, stated that the primary function of the provisional government of free India would be "to defend India and resist aggression with all the *armed* as well as the non-violent forces at its command together with the Allied powers."[128] Again, when interned in the Aga Khan Palace, Gandhi said : "The National Government will, no doubt, in case of India being made free, fight for the Allies' cause with *all the military resources* at its disposal and will co-operate with the Allied Nations in every possible manner."[129] And in his interview to Stuart Gelder of *News Chronicle* (London) in July 1944, he pointed out that his object was "to help and not hinder Allied war effort" and, at the same breath, condemned sabotage and other underground activities of the participants in the 'Quit India' movement, "saying that it is all violence..."[130] Again, towards the end of July 1944, Viceroy Wavell received a letter from him assuring him that the Congress should give full co-operation in the war effort."[131]

The Czechs, the German Jews or the Chinese never pretended to cherish faith in non-violence, but Gandhi and his lieutenants, who never failed to swear by it, were found wanting *every time* their faith was tested. We shall trace the story to the end of the mahatma's life.

In March 1946 Gandhi was telling a group of army men that "Independent India will have need of you. You have had military training. You will give India the benefit of that training."[132]

The policies of the Congress, the Muslim League and the raj were driving the sub-continent relentlessly towards communal holocausts and partition on communal lines. But Gandhi was unperturbed. In his note of conversation with Gandhi on 13 April 1946, Major Wyatt recorded : "He thinks *there may well have to be a blood bath in India before her problems are solved.* He would urge non-violence on Congress but does not expect them to observe it. The only thing he expects from Congress in the event of civil war is that they will fight decently and take one tooth for one tooth..."[133] While claiming to remain true to his gospel of love, the mahatma expected his lieutenants to uphold the law of Moses. On 6 May 1946, according to Viceroy Wavell, Gandhi told him, Sir Stafford Cripps and Secretary of State Lord Pethick-Lawrence that "we must either adopt entirely the Congress point of view, if we thought it just, or Jinnah's point of view if we thought it juster ; but there was no half-way house." Wavell noted : "Gandhi seemed quite unmoved at the prospect of civil war..."[134] It was this inflexible attitude adopted by the Congress bosses since 1928, compounded by the policies of the raj and Muslim reactionaries, that made the communal blood bath inevitable. At a meeting between Wavell, Gandhi and Nehru on 27 August 1946, a few days after the 'Great Killing' in Calcutta, "Gandhi," wrote Wavell, "said that if a blood bath was necessary it would come about in spite of non-violence."[135] According to Gandhi's own admission, non-violence which, he claimed, was a potent weapon against Hitler and the Japanese militarists, was useless in resolving the conflict between Congress and Muslim League leaders over the share of the Indian legacy that the British proposed to leave behind them.

When the savage communal war, the prospect of which had left Gandhi unmoved, started in mid-August 1946, another votary of non-violence, "Sardar Patel, surveying the scene from his orthodox political plane," wrote Pyarelal, one of Gandhi's secretaries and biographers, "thought in terms of reciprocity—uniform action in Bihar and Bengal and elsewhere."[186] At the Meerut Congress session, held in November 1946, Patel thundered : "The sword will be met by the sword."[187] And, presiding over the session, another staunch Gandhite and votary of non-violence, J. B. Kripalani, said : "Today, because there are communal riots and horizon ,appears a little dark, we get confused, and in that confusion, the best of us seem to lose their faith in non-violence. We think that nothing can be accomplished through non-violence."[188]

When communal riots spread from Calcutta to Noakhali, Gandhi went on a professed mission of peace to Noakhali. When he reached Chandpur on his way to his destination, a deputation of Hindus saw him on the morning of 7 November 1946 and told him that the Muslims' attacks on Hindu families were "a part of their plan for Pakistan." Laughing a ' sardonic laugh" and calling this plan "midsummer madness " of which he, as "a nature-curist," expected the patient to be fully cured, he said : "You will note that for the purposes of our present discussion, *I have not asked you to discard the use of arms*....The most tragic thing about the [Chittagong] armoury raid people is that they could not even multiply themselves. ...You will see *I am not*, as I have already said, *asking you just now to unlearn the use of arms*, or to follow my type of heroism....I want you to take up the conventional type of heroism....Use your arms well, if you must."[189] Ironically, the mahatma, whose whole life was dedicated to the cause of reviling, fighting and suppressing the revolutionaries like the Chittagong heroes, was invoking towards the end of his life their "fearlessness and courage" and advising Hindus to emulate them. While he had condemned them for fighting British imperialism, he seemed to want the revival of their methods in the struggle against the members of a sister community—blood of their blood, flesh of their flesh—to foil its leaders' demand for Pakistan. Such advice was pregnant with sinister implications.

Was Gandhi's mission to Noakhali a mission primarily of peace or a political mission? We do not know. We would only quote Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, a staunch Gandhite and Gandhi's secretary during his stay in Noakhali. Bose writes:

"He [Gandhi] was therefore not so much concerned about the actual casualties or the extent of material damage, but in discovering the political intentions working behind the move and the way of combating them successfully."[140]

Gandhi gave an interview on 8 December 1946 to Arabinda Bose, Subhas's nephew, who was carrying on relief work in Noakhali. "Gandhiji," to quote Nirmal Kumar Bose again, "dealt with the problem as a whole and explained that we should proceed in such a manner that the [Muslim League] Government might be put in the wrong and the struggle lifted to the necessary political plane....If, in the meantime, a few of the sufferers died of exposure, he was hard-hearted enough...not to be deflected from his course by such events. The whole struggle had to be lifted to the political plane; mere humanitarian relief was not enough, for it would fail to touch the root of the problem.[141]

Yet Gandhi's missions in Noakhali, Bihar (where he was obliged to move by insistent Muslim demands) and Calcutta have been justly acclaimed, though Nehru sarcastically remarked on 1 April 1947 to the newly-arrived Viceroy Mountbatten that "Mr Gandhi was going round with ointment trying to heal one sore spot after another on the body of India, instead of diagnosing the cause."[142] (The remedy that they themselves were preparing to apply was worse than the disease). No doubt, Gandhi's role in fighting the conflagration and trying to save Muslims in Delhi after the transfer of power deserves unstinted praise. But, at the same time, he talked of war between India and Pakistan and said to J. B. Kripalani: "Let us declare war. We shall fight and die if we are destined to."[143] He said similar things also at his prayer meetings.[144]

Gandhi also gave his support to the dispatch of Indian troops to Kashmir to fight back the tribal invaders from the north-west.[145] The mahatma also defended the march of Indian troops into Junagadh the ruler of which had acceded to Pakistan.[146] When the Nizam of Hyderabad avoided accession to India, K. M. Munshi, a Hindu chauvinist and a rabid anti-communist, who was the newly-appointed Indian Agent-General in Hyderabad, saw Gandhi at the end of December 1947 or just in the beginning of January 1948—about one month before Gandhi's assassination. Gandhi advised Munshi to exercise his "utmost skill in order to bring about a settlement." Munshi gave him the promise and asked him "how long the negotiations should continue." Munshi writes: "He laughed. He guessed what was passing in my mind. 'Shall we say for three or four months ?'

'And if they fail, what then ?'

'There will be no alternative but to bring things to an end (*to pachhi puru karej chhutako chhe*)' was his cryptic reply."[147] The meaning was obvious.

Yet men like Nehru, who knew him quite well, would have us believe that "Non-violence has been, and is, the sheet-anchor of his policy and activities."[148]

Indeed, the uses of non-violence were very much restricted. In the conflicts between landlords and tenants and between capitalists and workers, tenants and workers were enjoined strictly to observe non-violence, but not the landlords and capitalists. When struggles became bitter, non-violence had to be abandoned in favour of violent suppression of the peasants and workers. Gandhi and his lieutenants deprecated class war against landlords and capitalists, not the class war that the landlords and capitalists waged all the time against the peasants and workers. Indeed, the creed of non-violence was designed to deprive the oppressed of the weapon the oppressors freely used. Saumyendranath Tagore was right when he said to Romain Rolland that "Gandhi's 'non-violence' is a mantle which covers the maximum of social violence."[149]

Non-violence was not also for application to the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. As Gandhi said, "they had not yet discovered a sure method of dealing successfully in a non-violent manner with communal riots or goondaism.[150] When communal riots gripped Ahmedabad and a correspondent wrote to Gandhi that "unless you set an example in action, your writings and utterances will not be of any use to the ordinary people, and even Congressmen, in organizing non-violent protection of society," Gandhi, writing in *Harijan* of 4 August 1946, pointed out: "I have never had the chance to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots."[151] And on 2 December 1946, he told press reporters that he found that "my *ahimsa* does not seem to answer in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations."[152]

The principle of non-violence was also ruled out when the question of defence against fresh foreign aggression arose. Gandhi devised non-violence as an ideal weapon for use by the enslaved and exploited Indians against British imperialism and against the landlords and capitalists. The latter greeted it enthusiastically and placed ample funds at the disposal of the Congress leaders, especially Gandhi and Patel, to preach the gospel of non-violence as best as they could.

Though it may sound strange, at one stage of his life—in 1918 when he was out on a campaign to recruit soldiers to defend the British empire – the apostle of non-violence turned into an apostle of violence. He defended violence not only in practise but also philosophically. This theoretical justification of violence is never mentioned in the vast literature on Gandhi and the Congress.

Replying to C. F. Andrews who had doubts about his role as a recruiting sergeant, the mahatma wrote:

"*You cannot teach ahimsa to a man who cannot kill.* You cannot make a dumb man appreciate the beauty and the merit of silence. Although I know that silence is most excellent, I do not hesitate to take means that would enable the dumb man to regain his speech."[153]

Interestingly, Andrews argued:

"I do not see the analogy of the dumb man in your letter. It seems dangerously near the argument that the Indian who has forgotten altogether the blood-lust might be encouraged to learn it again first and then to repudiate it afterwards of his own account."[154]

While recruiting in a village in Kheda, Gandhi said at a meeting :

"The ability to use physical force is necessary for a true appreciation of satyagraha. *He alone can practise ahimsa who knows how to kill, i.e., knows what himsa is.*"[155]

Again, he said :

"To him who wants to learn the art of fighting, who would know how to kill, I would even teach the use of force....He who does not know how to lay down his life without killing others may learn how to die killing."[156]

In a letter of 31 July 1918 to Ada West, Gandhi, referring to his recruiting campaign, wrote :

"The ancients in India knew the art of warfare—the art of *killing*—and yet reduced the activity to a minimum....Today I feel that everybody is desirous of killing [sic!] but most are afraid of doing so or powerless to do so. Whatever is to be the result I feel certain that the power must be restored to India. The result may be carnage. Then India must go through it."[157]

Hailing the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 in a letter of 10 July to V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Gandhi asserted :

"The gateway to our freedom is situated on the French soil. *No victory worth the name has yet been won without the shedding of blood.*"[158]

While denouncing the use of force against the British raj, Gandhi always claimed that violence was incompatible with India's past history and culture. That was one of the stock arguments he used to condemn the revolutionaries. But writing to C. F. Andrews on 6 July 1918, Gandhi asserted that such a view was wrong and argued that the *Mahabharata*, Tulsidas's *Ramayana*, Manu and Sankaracharyya extolled violence. He also referred to the 'Mahomedan' and 'English' periods of Indian history to drive home his thesis that the Indian people had never repudiated violence or 'blood lust'.[159]

In another letter to Andrews, dated 29 July 1918, Gandhi wrote :

"War will be always with us. There seems to be no possibility of the whole human nature becoming transformed....There is real *ahimsa* in defending my wife and children even at the risk of striking down the wrongdoer."[160]

If that was his realization, what worth then were his endless sermons that no hand should be raised against the worst wrongdoers—the imperialist oppressors—who brought ruin to the lives of hundreds of millions of men, women and children?

It seems that, according to the needs of the hour, the apostle of non-violence could change into an apostle of violence—in theory as well as in practice.

It is worth noting that, while preaching the virtues of violence, the mahatma saw to it that it was never directed against the British raj but against its enemies for, to him, India's salvation lay in helping it.

What Gandhi aimed at accomplishing and succeeded to an extent in doing by his experiments with non-violence was emasculation of the anti-imperialist militancy of the people and spread of confusion among them. These helped the raj ideologically and politically to isolate and suppress the revolutionary forces which Gandhi often denounced as the "unruly elements" or "the rabble."

Those who believe that force, physical force, is the midwife of the old society pregnant with a new one are no less conscious than at least Gandhi of the need for soul force. Rather, it is they, more than those who glibly extol the virtues of non-violent satyagraha and have at the same time self-aggrandizement as the sole aim of their lives, who realize that without soul force millions dare not fight against powerful enemies and be prepared to lay down their lives and risk the lives and welfare of their dear ones, which a genuine revolution demands. It is the experience of all peoples throughout the world, these who have made history as well as those who have as yet failed to do so, that soul force must be wedded to physical force, that peaceful struggle must be combined with non-peaceful struggle, in order to abolish theregime of the imperialists and domestic exploiting classes and, in the process, to cleanse society of the accumulated filth of ages. All else is camouflage and deception, and is intended to hoodwink and divert the oppressed masses from the road that leads to their emancipation.

To sum up, Gandhi's creed of non-violence seems to be both a shield and a sword. As a shield, it was non-violence in thought, word and deed to be scrupulously practised by the enslaved and the oppressed in their struggles with the raj and the native exploiting classes ; as a sword, it was violence in defence of the imperialist order and in defence of the interests of the domestic sharks.

Antonio Gramsci observed :

"Thus India's political struggle against the English (and to a certain extent that of Germany against France, or of Hungary against the Little Entente) knows three forms of war : war of movement, war of position, and underground warfare. *Gandhi's passive resistance is a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at others underground warfare.* Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes of war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belongs to underground warfare." According to Gramsci, these were "forms of mixed struggle—fundamentally of a military character, but mainly fought on the political plane (though in fact every political struggle always has a military substratum)..."[161]

All this seems curious. The terms which Gramsci used to describe Gandhi's methods would have shocked the mahatma, to whom "Down with the Union Jack smelt of violence." Gramsci seems to have been unaware that Gandhi's passive resistance was *always* undertaken *mainly* "to sterilize the forces of violence" among the people ;[162] that Gandhi condemned boycott of foreign goods except of foreign cloth ; that Gandhi abhorred and forbade strikes by workers even as part of a political struggle ; that Gandhi detested the use of weapons and combat troops against British imperialism and condemned all secret, underground activities. Gramsci's basic premise that Gandhi's was a struggle which aimed at making India really free from direct or indirect imperialist rule is, as we have seen, quite wrong. Indeed, Gandhi's strategy and tactics were an ideal counterpart of the British imperial strategy of devolution of power by successive stages to "friendly and reliable hands" who have been tested and found worthy of trust. More of this later.

NOTES

1. *Goals*

1 *CWG*, XLV, 344.

2 Baran De *et al*, *Freedom Struggle*, 160.

3 G. D. Birla to J. M. Keynes, 23 May 1932, PT Papers, File 107, Part II.

4 Gopal Haldar, "Revolutionary Terrorism", in Atulchandra Gupta (ed.), op cit, 226; Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, op cit, 59-60, 64, 68.

5 Quoted in ibid, 68.

6 James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917*, 47.

7 R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, II, 362-6.

8 *The Encyclopaedia*, I, 194.

9 Ibid, IV, 589.

10 Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, 236.

11 Spear. *A History of India*, II, 183.

12 See Ker, op cit, 224, 226. It is estimated that more than ten thousand Ghadarites returned to India in order to participate in the Indian revolution.

13 Ker, ibid, 230-1.

14 For the plan, see Extract from *The Report of the Sedition Committee*, 121-2; cited in R. C. Majumdar, op cit, II, 406-11.

15 *Terrorism in India 1917-1936*, 5.

16 R. C. Majumdar, op cit, II, 426; K. C. Ghosh, *The Roll of Honour*, 264.

17 Trailokyanath Chakrabarti, *Jeley Tris Bachar*, 64.

18 Ker, op cit, 248, 269.

19 K. C. Ghosh, op cit, 267.

20 R. C. Majumdar, op cit, II, 459-63.

21 Tilak, *His Writings and Speeches*, 166.

22 *CWG*, XIII, 46.

23 Ibid, 215.

24 Ibid, 465.

25 Ibid, 378.

26 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 372.

27 *CWG*, XV, 17; see also 15.

28 Gandhi to Srinivasa Sastri, 5 July 1918, ibid, XIV, 473; see also 479.

29 Ibid, 448; Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi*, 77.

30 Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, I, 32.

31 *SWN*, I 166.

32 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 76.

33 *CWG*, XIII, 529.

34 Ibid, XXXV, 488.

35 See Chap. 6 below.

35a Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 59; *SWN*, III, 36; Nanda op. cit. 287-90; B. N. Pandey, op cit, 131.

36 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 172.

37 *CWG*, XL, 44.

38 Ibid, XLII, 334.

39 *SWN*, IV, 166.

40 Halifax Papers, File 6 (India Office, London); cited in G. K. Lieten, "The Civil Disobedience Movement and the National Bourgeoisie", *Social Scientist*, May 1983, 34.

41. S. Satyamurti was a prominent Congress leader of Madras. For several years he was deputy leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly.

42 *SWN*, IV, 306.

43 *CWG*, XLII, 87, 180.

44 Ibid, 371.

45 Ibid, XLIII, 8.

46 Ibid, XLII, 434.

47 Ibid, 434-5.

48 Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, I, 365.

49 M. Nehru to J. Nehru, 4 Feb. 1930, JN Papers; cited in R. J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, 167.

50 *CWG*, XLV, 264, 265, 266.

51 Irwin Collection, 27; cited in R. J. Moore, op cit, 186.

52 *CWG*, XLV, 445-6.

53 See Chap. 6 below.

54 *The Encyclopaedia*, X, 136, 141.

55 *CWG*, XLVIII, 18.

56 Ibid, 362-3.

57 Ibid, 147; see also 177, 246, 254-6.

58 G. D. Birla, *Bapu*, III, 263.

59 See Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, with Unpublished Documents from National Archives of India, 196; also *Documents*, I, 581.

60 Birla, *Bapu*, III, 393; Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, 138.

61 *CWG*, LXXI, 28.

62 V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, 358-9.

63 *TOP*, X, 946.

64 *TOP*, XI, 132.

65 *CWG*, XXII, 102.

66 *IAR*, 1931, I, 26.

67 Birla, *Bapu*, III, [illegible].

68 Quoted in R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 478.

69 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 236-7 n.

70 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 412.

71 B. B. Misra, *The Indian Political Parties*, 359.

72 Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 Apr. 1936, *CWG*, LXIII, [illegible].

73 Interview to *Madras Mail*, 22 Dec. 1935, ibid, LXII, [illegible].

74 Gandhi to Patel, 19 Aug. 1934, ibid, LVIII, 380.

75 Gandhi to Carl Heath, 13 Sept. 1938, ibid, LXVII, 339.

76 Speech at AICC meeting, 15 Jan. 1942, *CWG*, LXXV, 224 ; see also ibid, XLI, 241 ; LXIX, 211.

77 *SWN*, II, 269.

78 Ibid, III, 89.

79 Jogesh Chandra Bagal, "Congress in Bengal (1885-1920)", in Atulchandra Gupta (ed.), op cit, 185.

80 Quoted in Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 125.

80a Ibid, 68.

81 *SWN*, III, 41.

82 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 65.

83 Gopal, op cit, I, 121.

84 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 211.

85 *TOP*, X, 18.

86 Ibid, 785 ; see also 829, 897-8.

87 Ibid, 699.

88 Ibid, 962.

89 Ibid, 974-5 ; see also 965.

90 See V. P. Menon, op cit, 415 ; Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, 134, 159 ; Suniti Kumar Ghosh, "On the Transfer of Power in India", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (Colorado), July–Sept. 1985, 20.

91. Edgar Snow, *People on Our Side*, 45.

2. *'The Circle of Unity'*

1 Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship", in *SWM*, IV, 417.

2 Cardoso, "Dependency and Development in Latin America", in Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin (eds.), *Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies"*, 125.

3 *CWG*, XLVIII, 14-5, 16.

4 Ibid, XX, 293.

5 *CWG*, XLV, 898.

6 Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, II, 196.

7 See Chap. IV, Section 1 below.

8 *Harijan*, 22 Feb. 1942 ; cited in Kaka Kalelkar, *To a Gandhian Capitalist*, 37.

9 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 6.

10 Gandhi to G. D. Birla, 9.4.45, in ibid, 281.

11 Birla, *Bapu*, III, 189.

12 Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 242-3 ; *Bapu*, IV, 330.

13 B. Chatterji, "Business and Politics in the 1930s", in C. Baker *et al* (eds.), op cit, 564.

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15 B. G. Gokhale, "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: The Party Organiser as Political Leader", in Park and Tinker (eds.), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, 98.

16 Tahmankar, *Sardar Patel*, 17-8.

17 *TOP*, IX, 1010.

18 Prasad, *Autobiography*, esp. 366.

19 Gopal, op cit, I, 190.

20 Shankardass, *The First Congress Raj*, 12.

21 *CWG*, XL, 311.

22 See Gyanendra Pandey, "A Rural Base for Congress: the United Provinces 1920-40", in D. A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj*, 213, 215.

23 All Parties Conference 1928, *Supplementary Report of the Committee*, 32.

24 All Parties Conference 1928, *Report of the Committee*, 33-4, 36.

25 All Parties Conference 1928, *Supplementary Report*, 14, 15, 16.

26 Barun De *et al*, *Freedom Struggle*, 150, 151.

27 *CWG*, LVIII, 247-9.

28 Ibid, XXII, 508; XLV, 261-3, 373; XLVIII, 34.

29 Gopal, op cit, 137.

30 J. Nehru to Altafur Rahman, 30 July 1931, AICC Papers, File G-140 (kw) (i) / 1931; cited in Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, 197; see also *SWN*, V, 310.

31 Gopal, op cit, 150.

32 *CWG*, XLVIII, 16.

33 Ibid, 257; see also 277.

34 *SWN*, XV, 424, 428; see also Nehru to Sir Saremal Bapna, Prime Minister of Alwar State, 17 Apr. 1946, ibid, 420.

35 Ibid, 426.

36 *CWG*, LXXXVII, 436; See also LXX, 316; LXXI, 350, 344.

37 Quoted in *SWN*, XIV, 409.

38 *CWG* XIX, 419-20; Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", in R. Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I*, 152 ff; G. Pandey, "A Rural Base for Congress: The United Provinces 1920-40," op cit, 206 ff.

39 Gopal, op cit, 54, 56.

40 Ibid, 61; see also Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", op cit, 159.

41 Gopal, op cit, 54.

42 *SWN*, V, 70: See also 90, 104, 139.

43 G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress*, 180 ff; G. Pandey, *The Congress and the Nation*, 16-18; G. Pandey, "A Rural Base for Congress", op cit, 210-4; Binay Bhusan Chaudhuri, "Agrarian Movements in Bengal and Bihar, 1919-39", in A. R. Desai (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*, 359-60, 366; D. N. Dhanagare, *Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics*, 92-8; Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, 455-9.

44 *CWG*, XXVII, 244.

45 Ibid, XXV, 341-2; see also 360, 363.

46 Ibid, XXVII, 2.

47 Ibid, 418.

48 Similar to the one he made to the princes of the native states.

49 *CWG*, XLV, 398.

50 Ibid, 398-9.

51 See Birla, *Bapu*, III, 267.

52 *CWG*, XLV, 328.

3. *Forms of Struggle*

1 B. R. Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire, 1880-1935", *IESHR*, Oct.-Dec. 1975, 352-3.

2 Palme Dutt, op cit, 401.

3 Ibid; see also V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, 16-7.

4 Memo on Indian Reforms by Lord Curzon, 27 June 1917; cited in Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire," op cit, 353.

5 Irwin to Davidson, 5 Dec. 1929, R. R. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 311; cited in John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India between the Wars", in Christopher Baker *et al* (eds.), op cit, 406.

6 Birla, *Bapu*, II, 61.

7 Ibid, 106; see also 118-9.

8 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 254.

9 *CWG*, XIII, 528-9, 559, 575-6.

10 Ibid, XIV, 555.

11 Prasad, *Autobiography*, 495-6.

12 *CWG*, XL, 365.

13 Ibid, XLV, 253.

14 *The Encyclopaedia*, X, 126,

15 JN Papers, vol. 17; also *CWG*, LXVII, 332.

16 Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 16.

17 *CWG*, LXV, 408.

18 Birla to Mahadev Desai, 23 July 1937, Birla, *Bapu*, III, 21.

19 *CWG*, XV, 188; XX, 189; XXIII, 202, etc.

20 *CWG*, XV, 105-6, 107, 171-6; XVII, 155.

21 Ibid, XV, 127, 131-2.

22 Ibid, XVII, 389-91; see also 304, 415, 433; his letter to the Viceroy, Ibid, 502-4.

23 Ibid, XXII, 19.

24 Ibid, 187, 288.

25 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 287.

26 *CWG*, XV, 436-7; see also XXI, 332; Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 287; Tendulkar, op cit, IV, 372.

27 *CWG*, XV, 432.

28 Ibid, XX, 365.
29 Ibid, 498; XXII, 163.
30 Ibid, XXIII, 301.
31 See, for instance, ibid, LXIV, 195; LXV, 398-9, 408.
32 Ibid, XXV, 199.
33 Ibid, XXVII, 243-4.
34 Ibid, 9, 418.
35 Ibid, XLII, 67, 150.
36 Ibid, 435-6; see also his letter to Viceroy Irwin, ibid, XLIII, 2-7.
37 Ibid, XLVIII, 389, 399, 406-7, 458.
38 Willingdon to Hoare, 28 Dec. 1931, Templewood Papers, Vol. V; cited in S. Gopal, op cit, 170.
39 S. K. Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, 219-22.
40 Birla, *Bapu*, IV, 30.
41 Ibid, 21-2.
42 Ibid, 35.
43 *CWG*, XLV, 440.
44 Ibid, 446.
45 Ibid, 318.
46 J. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 187.
47 Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya, *Satyagrahas in Bengal, 1921-39*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 1.
48 *CWG*, XIII, 521.
49 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 126; see also *CWG*, XVII, 153, 154; XVI, 369; cp. Jawaharlal's statement during his trial on 17 May 1922: "Our weapons are not the old time ones of force and coercion. The weapons which our great leader has put in our hands are those of love and sacrifice. We suffer ourselves and by our suffering seek to convert our adversary' (*SWN*, I, 253).
50 *CWG*, XVII, 156.
51 Ibid, XXV, 489.
52 Ibid, XXVI, 378, 381.
53 Ibid, 394.
54 Ibid, XV, 176.
55 Ibid, LVII, 301.
56 Ibid, XV, 389.
57 Ibid, LXVII, 436-7.
58 Ibid, XV, 226.
59 Ibid, XVII, 481.
60 Ibid, XXI, 80.
61 Ibid, XV, 169.
62 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 291.
63 See Chaps, IV, V, VIII below.
64 Ibid.
65 *CWG*, XII, 519.
66 *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence* (entry dated 29 June 1926), 64.

67 Lenin, "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism", *CWL*, XIX, 23.

68 *CWG*, XXIII, 114.

69 *SWN*, X, 161.

70 D. G. Tendulkar, op cit, VIII, 95.

71 *CWG*, XXVII, 241-2.

72 Ibid, XXI, 560.

73 Tendulkar, op cit, V, 101 ; see also *CWG*, LXIX, 168.

74 Ibid, XVIII, 184.

75 From a report of Gandhi's speech on 8 Apr. 1931, ibid, XLV, 401.

76 Ibid, XXI, 163.

77 Ibid, XXV, 424. Jawaharlal said : "I believe that the salvation of India and *indeed of the rest of the world*, will come through non-violent non-co-operation. Violence has had a long enough career in the world, it has been weighed repeatedly and found wanting. I firmly believe in the efficacy of non-violence" (*SWN*, II, 208, 209) ; see also *SWN*, I, 240.

78 *CWG*, XL, 363, 364.

79 Ibid, XXIV, 53 ; see also XV, 176 ; XXXV, 498 ; Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, 231. Jawaharlal said that he opposed the boycott of British goods "on the ground, *inter alia*, that it was opposed to the basic principle of non-co-operation, that it was based on hate and not love and so on" (*SWN*, I, 202).

80 *CWG*, XXIII, 415. Interestingly, Pandit Motilal wrote back to Gandhi that 'obstruction' "is a very much misused and misapplied word, but I admit that our Swarajist nostrils are not trained enough to smell violence in it..." (Ibid, 558).

81 Ibid, XLIII, 16. Like his mentor, Jawaharlal said : "I condemn cries of 'Down with Union Jack' which have now been stopped by the Congress" (*SWN*, V, 294) ; see also *SWN*, XV, 5.

82 *CWG*, XXII, 256. Jawaharlal wrote : "Social boycott in the shape of stopping the service of barbers, dhobis [washermen], medical help, conveyances should be discouraged" (*SWN*, I, 240).

83 *CWG*, XXI, 506.

84 Tendulkar, op cit, IV, 328.

85 *CWG*, LXIX, 9.

86 Ibid, LXVII, 413-4.

87 Ibid, LXVIII, 139-40.

88 Ibid, 203-4.

89 G. D. Birla, *Bapu*, IV, 53 ; Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 273 ; *CWG*, LXXII, 188.

90 Ibid, 230.

91 Ibid, XIV, 361.

92 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 191.

93 P. H. M. Van Den Dungen, "Gandhi in 1919 : Loyalist or Rebel ?" In R. Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, 45, 56.

94 Palme Dutt, op cit, 275 : *CWG*, XIV, 381.
95 Ibid, 375.
96 Ibid, 392.
97 Ibid, XV, 17, 15.
98 Ibid, XIX, 122.
99 Ibid, XXVII, 51-2.
100 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 465.
101 *CWG*, XLVIII, 306 ; see also 60, 177.
102 Ibid, 227.
103 Palme Dutt, op cit, 302-3.
104 Congress Bulletin issued by the AICC, 16 May 1930, AICC Papers, File G-30 / 1930 ; and AICC Papers, File 1 / 1930.
105 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 214.
106 See Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army ; Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, 155.
107 *CWG*, XLV, 454.
108 Ibid, XLVIII, 101.
109 Gandhi's word describing the Garhwali soldiers' act, ibid.
110 Ibid, 67.
111 Quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 309 from *Monde*, 20 Feb. 1932.
112 *CWG*, LXXVI, 395.
113 AICC Papers, File 42 / 1936.
114 Prasad, *Autobiography*, 479.
115 *CWG*, LXX, 293 ; see also 113-4.
116 Birla, *Bapu*, III, 341, 343, 349.
117 Mahadev Desai to G. D. Birla, 10 Sept. 1939, ibid, III, 338.
118 *CWG*, LXX, 311 ; see also 189-90.
119 Ibid, 175.
120 Birla, *Bapu*, III, 344.
121 Prasad, *Autobiography*, 494.
122 Ibid, 513.
123 Abul Kalam Azad, op cit, 34-5.
124 Ibid, 35-7 ; Tendulkar, op cit, V, 326-7.
125 The Bardoli resolution, adopted by the Congress Working Committee on 30 Dec. 1941, after Japan's spectacular victories in South-East Asia had revived hopes in the breasts of the Congress leaders that the raj would be reasonable, again offered Congress help to Britain's war provided it was willing to meet the wishes of the leadership and, again, formally relieved Gandhi of the burden of his leadership.
126 Viceroy Linlithgow's wire to Secretary of State Amery, 17 Jan. 1942, in *TOP*, I, 35.
127 Azad, op cit, 78.
128 Ibid, 239 ; see also Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 435-6.
129 G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 238-9.
130 Sitaramayya, op cit, II, 591.

131 *Wavell the Viceroy's Journal*, 83.
132 *CWG*, LXXXIII, 303.
133 *TOP*, VII, 262 ; *CWG*, LXXXIII, 441.
134 *Wavell the Viceroy's Journal*, 260.
135 Ibid, 341 ; *TOP*, VIII, 313.
136 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, II, 16.
137 *IAR*, 1946, II, 291.
138 Quoted in Tendulkar, op cit, VII, 327.
139 Ibid, 300-1, 303.
140 Bose, *My Days with Gandhi*, 48.
141 Ibid, 100.
142 *TOP*, X, 71.
143 *CWG*, LXXXIX, 237.
144 Ibid, 246, 494 ; Pyarelal, op cit, II, 476 : N. K. Bose, op cit, 251.
145 *CWG*, LXXXIX, 483 ; see also *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches* 1949-153, 357-8 ; Nehru, *Independence and After*, 236.
146 Pyarelal, op cit, II, 486.
147 Munshi, *The End of an Era : Hyderabad Memories*, 6.
148 J. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 127 fn.
149 *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, 276.
150 *CWG*, LXX, 205.
151 Ibid, LXXXV, 54-5 ; Tendulkar, op cit, VII, 204.
152 Ibid, 331.
153 *CWG*, XIV, 444.
154 Ibid, 444, fn. 3.
155 Ibid, 454.
156 Ibid, 469.
157 Ibid, 510.
158 Ibid, 489.
159 Ibid, 474-5.
160 Ibid, 509.
161 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York; International Publishers) 1979, 229-30.
162 See Chapters V and VIII below.

CHAPTER FOUR

GANDHI'S EARLY EXPERIMENTS WITH SATYAGRAHA

South Africa: A Weapon is Forged

"South Africa", said Gandhi, "gave the start to my life's mission."[1] It was here that he devised his method of struggle which he named satyagraha, developed his mode of leadership and forged links with and won appreciation of the highest representatives of the raj – in South Africa, India and Britain—as well as of India's business and political elite. Gandhi had gone to South Africa for professional reasons in 1893 when he was about twenty-four and returned to India in January 1915—at the age of about forty-six. His experiments with truth, especially his satyagrahas, there were watched with keen interest by the British rulers as well as India's big businessmen and were supported by the latter with very generous funds.

The Indians in South Africa consisted mostly of indentured and ex-indentured labour. The indentured labourers went on five-year contracts to work on the railways and in the coal mines and plantations in Natal. Theirs was actually a state of semi-slavery, as W. W. Hunter said.[2]

All Indians, including prosperous Gujarati merchants, were victims not only of social ostracism but of many social and legal disabilities. Gandhi, the young barrister from India, was known as a "coolie barrister", despite his "faultless English dress", which was unable to save him from kicks and blows and other indignities when he aspired to equality of status with Europeans in railway trains, other means of transport or on the pavements of streets.

Natal and the Cape Colony were British colonies while the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were Dutch until the end of the Boer war in 1901. Later, in 1910, the four colonies merged to form the Union of South Africa. In the Transvaal, then a Dutch colony, Indians had to pay a poll tax of £ 3 and had no franchise;

"locations," inconvenient and unhealthy, were set apart for them and colour bar was strictly practised. It was no less vicious in Natal.

The few Indian immigrants who enjoyed the right of franchise in Natal were mostly deprived of it in 1894. Gandhi drafted a petition to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, on behalf of Indians in Natal, opposing the Franchise Law Amendment Bill. The petition, which had no effect, stated : "Your Lordship's Petitioners have noticed with shame and sorrow the zealous attempt made to compare your Petitioners with the Natives of South Africa."[3] In an open letter to the members of the Natal legislatures, Gandhi, while claiming that the Indians and the English have descended from the same common stock, regretted that the English regarded the Indians as "little better, if at all, than savages or the Natives of Africa," whom he referred to as "raw Kaffirs."[4]

In "An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa," dated 16 December 1895, Gandhi stated : "It is true England 'wafts her sceptre' over India. The Indians are not ashamed of that fact. They are proud to be under the British Crown, because they think that England will prove India's deliverer."[4a]

In the meantime—in 1894—the Natal government proposed to levy an annual tax of £ 25 on every Indian whose indenture had expired, when the average income of an Indian male worker was no more than 14 shillings a month. The Natal Indian Congress, of which Gandhi was secretary, organized an agitation against the proposal. Ultimately an annual tax of £ 3 was imposed on every Indian—man, woman and child above a certain age – with the approval of the then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, whom Gandhi described as the "trustee of the welfare of India."[5]

During these years Gandhi "vied with Englishmen in loyalty to the throne" and, curiously enough, it was his "love of truth [that] was at the root of this loyalty."[6]

Soon after, despite Indian representations, the Natal Legislative Assembly passed two bills which, though not explicitly directed against Indians, were so designed as to restrict Indian immigration and curb the activities of Indian traders.

On the outbreak of the Boer war in 1899 Gandhi took part in it on the side of the British as the organizer and leader of an ambulance corps of 1100 Indians and won appreciation and a war medal. But the conditions of the Indians in the colonies, especially in the Transvaal, continued to deteriorate after the victory of the British colonists.[7] Anti-Indian sentiment swept the country and various administrative measures, to some of which Gandhi consented, were taken to drive out Indians and restrict further immigration.

In 1906, when the Zulu rebellion broke out, Gandhi led as sergeant-major a volunteer stretcher-bearer company for service with the Natal government forces. "The rightness or otherwise of the 'rebellion'," wrote the mahatma, "was therefore not likely to affect my decision", as he continued to cherish a "genuine sense of loyalty" to the British empire.[8] This was not surprising for, according to him, Queen Victoria's proclamation after the defeat of India's First War of Independence was "the Magna Charta of the British Indians," and Sir John Lawrence was "the Saviour of the Punjab" and "in a very great measure, of the whole of British India."[9] The Zulus, the indigenous people of Natal, who lacked fire-arms, were being butchered in their thousands in their own homes. Gandhi wrote : "This was no war but a man-hunt..."[10]

But all the petitions and prayers and deputations to England and surrenders to newer and newer offensives of the European colonists in South Africa and all loyal and devoted services to the empire failed to melt their hard hearts. Even before Gandhi returned from the campaign against the Zulus, the "Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance," a fresh offensive against Indians in the Transvaal, had been introduced in the Legislative Council. It cancelled all existing permits and registration certificates and required Indians to give a complete set of finger-impressions before they could obtain fresh permits. A deputation of Indians, including Gandhi, waited on the British Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, but ultimately the ordinance was passed. Besides, another discriminatory act called the Immigrants' Restriction Act was also passed.

Now began Gandhi's satyagraha, the newly devised form of struggle. Gandhi and the other leaders asked the Indians to take a pledge not to register themselves under the new Act and to remain non-violent. Very few Indians registered under the Act, and many, including Gandhi, were put behind bars. When repression failed, the government opened negotiations, and Gandhi was taken from prison to General Smuts, then Colonial Secretary in charge of Asiatic Affairs. Again Gandhi surrendered. It was agreed on his proposal that the Indians would register not under the Act but *voluntarily*, giving all the ten finger-impressions as required by the Act. According to Gandhi's version, Smuts had agreed to repeal the Act after the Indians' *voluntary* compliance with its conditions. Many Indians protested and demanded that the Act should first be repealed and then the Indians should be called upon to register voluntarily.[11]

But Gandhi's 'higher morality' dictated a different course. Many remained unconvinced and accused him of selling the community to General Smuts. When Gandhi was going to register by giving all his finger impressions, some Pathans struck and kicked him.[12]

Thanks to the mahatma, the Black Act was not repealed. Besides, more discriminatory acts were passed. Satyagraha was resumed ; it was now directed against the Transvaal Immigration Act. Some Indians proposed that satyagraha should be offered against all anti-Asiatic legislation throughout South Africa. But the mahatma would have none of it. He held that such suggestions, made by Indians "ignorant of the principles of Satyagraha," 'involved a breach of principle."[13] It was the beauty of satyagraha that its target must be very, very narrow - a quite limited and partial one. Its aim should be not to uproot the evil but to bring about some petty reform, a sort of cosmetic change, if possible.

During the satyagraha some Indians including Gandhi broke the law and were sent to various terms of imprisonment. Gradually, it petered out.

When, in 1909, steps were being taken to bring the four colonies into a Union of South Africa, Gandhi and another Indian went to London to represent the Indian case. But the mission failed to accomplish anything. General Smuts told the British Secretary of State for the Colonies that "he was not prepared to admit even the theoretical equality of Asiatics with white people."[14] Earlier, this friend of Gandhi had stated : "The Asiatic cancer, which has already eaten so deeply into the vitals of South Africa, ought to be resolutely eradicated."[15]

It may be noted that, on his way back from England to South Africa, Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj or The Indian Home Rule* "in answer to the Indian school of violence, and its prototype in South Africa," as he said.[16] This little book, full of oracular utterances on various subjects and issues, contains such profound thoughts as the following :

"It may be a debatable matter whether railways spread famines, but it is beyond dispute that they propagate evil." And "Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin". And "The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality." And "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization, it represents a great sin."[17]

Instead of improving, conditions continued to grow worse for the Indians. At the request of Gandhi and after having talks in London with the Secretary of State for India and with the approval of the South African Government, Gokhale came to South Africa in October 1912. He had meetings with Prime Minister Botha, Smuts and other ministers, besides other leading Europeans, and assured Gandhi that the poll tax of £ 3 would be abolished the Black Act repealed and the racial bar removed from the immigration law[18] But after Gokhale's departure, the South African Government refused to abolish the poll tax or repeal the Black Act. Till then, Gandhi's "satyagraha had been limited to individuals" and "the indentured and ex-indentured labourers had been expressly excluded from the struggle. Now it became impossible to prevent their joining it in a matter directly affecting their future."[19]

In 1913 white workers went on general strike and Gandhi, anxious not to embarrass the rulers, suspended his satyagraha. As *Indian Opinion*, a journal run by him in South Africa, reported, Gandhi, "in accordance with Smuts' wish, refrained from taking any action because of the unexpected troubles of the Government."[20] Gandhi's 'higher morality' would not allow the different sections of the exploited people to unite : it dictated that the oppressors should deal with them separately. But the repressive legislation like the Immigration Regulation Act came into force, and arrests of Indians went on when Gandhi was preaching the virtues of not embarrassing the rulers.

On resumption of satyagraha, Gandhi indicated that the "struggle would be confined to about a hundred resisters."[21] He sent Gokhale about "65 or 66 names as the highest and 16 as the lowest number of such resisters."[22] But what Gandhi proposed, the explosive situation disposed. Gandhi's policy was criticized at a meeting at Durban, which passed a vote of no confidence in him.[23] At this time an unexpected development took place, which like a spark set the dry faggots of unrest burning. A judgement from the Cape Supreme Court rendered illegal all Indian marriages performed according to Hindu, Muslim and Zoroastrian rites. The South African government was afraid of the mood of the Indians and urged the Colonial office in London to ask the Government of India "*to use such influence as they may possess with Gandhi* and others."[24]

The Indian workers in the coal-mining area of Natal came out on a general strike. There was flogging ; light and water in their quarters were cut off and they were robbed of their household things.[25] But they refused to surrender. Gandhi rushed to Newcastle to take charge of the situation. While negotiating with the authorities for the repeal of the £3 tax, Gandhi led about 5000 workers to cross the border into the Transvaal and "see them safely deposited in jail."[26] The workers, including women, showed wonderful courage and quiet heroism.[27]

The government removed Gandhi and Polak, his associate, to prison and treated Gandhi with the utmost generosity. The workers, on the other hand, "were taken back to Natal without arrangement of food", were "driven underground" and compelled "to work at the coal-face" as prisoners. "But, undismayed by flogging and other brutal acts of terrorism, they continued to refuse to work."[28] Though Gandhi "had warned his colleagues of the inadvisability of other large-scale movements," thousands of Indian workers in the sugar plantations, municipal workers and workers on railways and docks ceased work to express their solidarity with the miners. Virtually almost the entire Indian working class in South Africa joined the struggle. There were firings on workers ; many were wounded and several killed. "But again the strikers refused to be cowed down before this abuse of authority."[29] To quote Gandhi, "Government now adopted a policy of blood and iron.... The slightest disturbance on the part of the labourers was answered by rifle fire.... But the labourers refused to be cowed down."[30] As Gandhi admitted, "after my arrest," that is, during about five weeks when he sat in prison making a pair of sandals for the feet of General Smuts[31] (who was running the machine of oppression on the Indian workers), Gandhi's associates "found it impossible to control the men, and the movement became not only spontaneous, but it assumed gigantic proportions".[32] The government found to their cost that they had made a grievous mistake by isolating Gandhi from the workers.

The heroic strike of about 40,000 Indian workers[33], which no brute force could crush, alarmed even the imperial government which came forward to express its solicitude for them. Even earlier, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies had cabled the Governor-General of South Africa "urging that immediate enactment of legislation to remove Indians' legal disabilities was matter of Imperial importance."[34] In India the protest against the South African action was led by Viceroy Lord Hardinge, who criticized the South African government publicly and proposed the appointment of "a strong impartial committee whereon Indian interests will be represented...."[35]

Gokhale sent C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson to act as mediators. "The suggestion of a commission of inquiry," as Polak said, "came, in the circumstances, as a godsend" to General Smuts.[36] Smuts promptly set up a commission of three South African whites, two of whom had pronounced anti-Indian bias. The Indians rejected the commission. Then, on 18 December 1913, Gandhi was released. At a meeting held on that very day he expressed his gratitude to his jailors for their "utmost courtesy" and for "his comfort" they had provided. In that speech there was no mention of the strike by the Indian workers, and of more than 10,000 arrests, brutal persecutions and killings of several strikers.[37]

In his cable, dated 19 December 1913, to the Colonial Office, the

Governor-General of South Africa pointed out that if the Indians refused to recognize the commission of inquiry and if they again resorted to struggle, a very dangerous situation would arise. He urged the Secretary of State for the Colonies to "impress the Indian Government through the India office with the extreme importance of securing the acceptance of the commission and abstinence from all provocative action by the British Indians in South Africa."[38] The Viceroy of India, in his turn, strongly impressed upon Gandhi through Gokhale what the South African government wanted. Though Gandhi regretted very much that it was not possible in view of the mood of the Indians to accept the commission unless some change in its composition was made, he did his utmost to bring the struggle to an end.

As usual, Gandhi started correspondence with the South African authorities. On 25 December 1913—within a week of his release—he wired to the South African Minister of the Interior *promising to safeguard the interests of European employers fo Indian labour and praying for an interview with General Smuts.*[39] Next day he wired to Gokhale requesting him to assure the Viceroy of India that *I would do everything conceivably possible for me not [to] embarrass our Government.*"[40]

There was a wave of enthusiasm among the Indians for carrying forward the struggle. "The agitation," as Gandhi said, "[was] assuming almost uncontrollable proportions."[41] Sensing the mood, he felt obliged to announce on 24 December that "a party of Indians courting jail would commence their march from Durban on January 1, 1914." At the same time he "wrote privately to the General [Smuts]" seeking an interview.[42] The interview was granted and the march was postponed.

Gandhi's cable of 26 December informed Gokhale that he wanted only two things : first, the inclusion of a European of their choice in the Commission of Inquiry, and second, the release of all prisoners *other than those convicted of violence*. He wanted the Viceroy to "urge acceptance [of] this middle course," that would smooth the way to "future permanent settlement" and suspension of the struggle.[43]

In an interview to Reuter towards the end of December, Gandhi assured the Europeans in South Africa that "he would leave no stone unturned to avoid a revival of passive resistance" and "*claimed to rank amongst the staunchest loyalists alike to the Imperial Government and to the Union Government*."[44]

Besides Gandhi's direct correspondence and interviews with General Smuts and the South African Minister of the Interior, very high level negotiations were in progress between the Government of India, the Imperial Government and the South African Government.[45] Lord Willingdon, then governor of Bombay, referred to the South African question as "in its very essence a highly Imperial question."[46] Gandhi was keeping the Viceroy informed of his plans and programmes through Gokhale ; the Viceroy was communicating with London ; Gokhale was conveying the Viceroy's wishes to Gandhi ; and Gandhi was accordingly bringing the movement, "which was assuming almost uncontrollable proportions", to an end, while invoking all the time his 'higher morality.'

Though the Indians' demand for the nomination of a European of their choice as an additional member of the Commission of Inquiry was rejected, the proposed march on 1 January was abandoned. According to Gandhi's estimate, the march of five thousand Indians was likely to swell to one of twenty thousand determined men and women.[47] (The whole of Natal, of which Durban was the capital, had then an Indian population of 80,000 including old men, women and children.) As Gandhi said, "poor men are already making preparations, and people who go and tell them that the march is not to be proceeded with on January 1 are not even believed."[48] Towards the end of December, Gandhi informed Gokhale that they were already selling their few belongings in anticipation of the march.[49] But the march never took place. Despite Gandhi's declaration of loyalty to the Union and Imperial governments and expression of his anxiety to avoid all struggle, several Indians were killed in police firing at about this time.[50]

Through Gokhale, the Viceroy informed Gandhi that he was sending his emissary, Sir Benjamin Robertson, to mediate between the South African Government and the Indian leaders and warned that Robertson would "immediately dissociate himself" if the Indians resorted to passive resistance.

Early in January 1914, European railway workers went on strike, "which made the position of the Government extremely delicate."[51] In an interview to *Pretoria News*, Gandhi said : "For myself I will be no party to embarrassing the Government at a time like this, we shall follow the policy that we adopted during the Rand miners' strike in July.....whatever happens (this very emphatically), whether the Minister's reply to us be favourable or unfavourable, *we shall not resume operations until the Railway matter is settled* ; *for that you have my personal assurance*."[52]

Gandhi's decision was highly appreciated by the South African rulers.[53] One of General Smuts' secretaries said : "I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do ? You help us in our days of need."[54]

It was ever Gandhi's policy to come to the rescue of the oppressors and exploiters by preventing the building of solidarity between the different sections of the oppressed. Interestingly, "Mr Andrews extolled the *chivalrous patriotism* [sic] of Mr Gandhi during the railway strike, in calling off the passive resistance movement so as not to embarrass the Government."[55] While he always oozed love and friendliness for Smuts and men of his ilk, he was hard and unforgiving towards the people who dared to challenge their rule.[56] He distinguished between "bona fide passive resisters" and "so-called passive resisters," between those Indians who had suffered without retaliating and those who had retaliated under the gravest provocation. While he prayed for the release of the former, he wanted the South African racists to punish the latter in the manner they liked.[57]

After "numerous personal interviews" between Smuts and Gandhi, Smuts and Robertson (the Viceroy's emissary), and Robertson and Gandhi, an agreement was arrived at. The poll tax would be abolished ; non-Christian marriages would be recognized, if they were registered in South Africa ; if a person had more than one wife, only one wife would have the legal title ; and it was agreed that certain discriminatory laws would be liberally administered though they would remain unchanged. Gandhi dropped the charges of atrocities on Indian workers ; he assured the Minister of the Interior that he would "refrain altogether from raking up old sores."[58] Thus, the mahatma, who had no personal wrongs to resent, drew down the curtain on the floggings, shootings and other atrocities on Indian workers.

At the mass meeting, held on 25 January 1914, Gandhi said : "what was more, they wanted, if they possibly could, to conciliate the Viceroy." He wanted his audience to respect the wishes of the Viceroy—"for whom, perhaps, there was no equal except perhaps Lord Ripon and Lord William Bentinck"—and of Gokhale and Lord Ampthill and "accept the present arrangement."[59] When the report of the Commission of Inquiry recommending the abolition of the poll tax and amendment of the marriage laws, was released in March, Gandhi hailed it as one imbued with "a sense of justice" and as "a perfect success for satyagraha."[60] The Indians' Relief Bill was passed, and the settlement was described by Gandhi as *"a charter of our freedom"* and *"the Magna Charta of our liberty in this land."*[61]

Gandhi knew how spurious the claim was. He himself acknowledged that "we shall still labour under legal disabilities which intense colour prejudice has brought into being. Administration of trade licence laws, largely on racial lines, the deprivation of the right to own land in the Transvaal, the precarious position under the Transvaal Gold Law, inter-provincial restrictions—these and many other such limitations of our liberty show how true were Lord Gladstone's words when he said that the Indians' Relief Bill did but the barest justice."[62] He wanted the Indians not to aspire to social equality with Europeans nor "even to the franchise", at least in the forseeable future.[63] Gandhi unhesitatingly surrendered to the racist ideology of the Europeans of South Africa.[64] Even a promise was given that there should be no more influx of Indians (except a few "highly educated Indians") into South Africa : "That was," as Gandhi put it, "a concession to present prejudice," i.e., a concession to the demands of the white racists.[65]

Gandhi confessed that "it was rather difficult to get the Indians to endorse this agreement."[66] A correspondent, who expressed the views of many Indians, wrote to Gandhi : "Nothing...should be left out from the full citizenship rights which are to be achieved, so that our people may not have to endure hardships again." In reply, Gandhi stated: "Like everything else, satyagraha has its limits. To understand how much may be achieved through it is the first step to success in it....It is our belief that raising our demands will amount to untruthfulness."[67] The fact is, the demands, far from being raised, had been whittled down as ever fresh offensives were launched by the Europeans. At a crowded meeting of Muslims on 15 July 1914, almost immediately before Gandhi left South Africa, the Chairman of the meeting "asked on whose authority the compromise was made with the Government." The Chairman observed that "Mr Gandhi had left them with the battle to be fought all over again."[68] What Gandhi acclaimed as "a charter of liberty" was actually no better than a charter of slavery. "When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the Satyagraha struggle and the present condition of the Indians in South Africa," wrote Gandhi a few years after, "one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing, or is inclined to question the efficacy of Satyagraha as a solvent of the problems of mankind."[69]

Gandhi was always eloquent in praising the contributions made by the Imperial Government, Viceroy Lord Hardinge and G. K. Gokhale to the settlement.[70] In an open letter to indentured Indians, Gandhi said: "The Imperial Government and the Government of India are parties to the settlement."[71]

The concessions—the abolition of the poll tax and the amendment of the marriage laws—that have been acclaimed *ad nauseam* as the triumph of satyagraha, were made by the South African Government under compulsion of several factors: the great struggle the Indians waged when the imprisonment of Gandhi and his associates had left them free to pursue their own militant path; the strike of the European railwaymen; and the imperial solicitude in view of the threat of an imminent imperialist war.[72] It may be noted that Gandhi's earlier satyagrahas had fizzled out without accomplishing anything.

Satyagraha, the new weapon Gandhi fashioned in South Africa, had the following main features:

First, his satyagraha had, as ever afterwards, very limited objectives. Instead of challenging the domination of a bunch of white racists, Gandhi unhesitatingly accepted them as the "dominant and governing race."[73] Instead of seeking social and political equality, it sought some minor reforms in immigration and marriage laws. It aimed not at changing a highly iniquitous system but in modifying a small part of the outgrowth of the system.

Second, not only were the demands pitched low but Gandhi put all conceivable restrictions on the struggle in respect of its methods and forces. The beauty of satyagraha was that it should not inflict any suffering on or embarrass the oppressor, that all the suffering should be borne by the enslaved and oppressed. While preaching love for the oppressor, a satyagrahi, as Gandhi said, "does not let slip a single opportunity for a settlement..."[74] Prayers, petitions, friendly approaches and negotiations were always part of the satyagraha. Gandhi always tried to confine satyagraha to as few people as possible. He did not want that satyagraha should involve the masses—workers and others who were the most exploited and the most militant.

Third, Gandhi's satyagraha completely ignored the indigenous population of South Africa—the Zulus and other Negroes, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. Rather, his experiments with truth permitted him to join the British in their unjust war against the Zulus. And his experiments with truth raised a wall of separation between the Indian workers and the European workers employed in mines and the railways and weakened both in their struggle against the rulers. Far from helping, this hindered the process of building understanding among the masses of the different communities through common struggle and gradual disappearance of racist feelings among them.

Fourth, Gandhi's satyagraha had to be supplemented by concrete demonstrations of loyalty to the people's enemy. One may refer to the role he played after his release from prison in December 1913.

Fifth, the *ashrams* Gandhi founded in South Africa—Phoenix near Durban and Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg—were an important part of his paraphernalia of satyagraha. In these *ashrams*, mostly financed by big compradors and feudals as his satyagraha campaigns were, he could mould the minds of the persons selected by him to serve as the torch-bearers of his message. It is through this band of men that he could hope to maintain his control over his satyagraha movement. A satyagraha campaign depended to a considerable extent on the immense funds which the big compradors and feudals provided him with. As we have noted, they had been watching with keen interest his activities in South Africa and had found in him the man they were looking for. On 10 January 1910, Ratan Tata, the younger son of Jamsetji Tata, who was knighted afterwards, wrote to Gandhi : "My warm appreciation of the noble struggle our countrymen are waging....I need hardly add that I shall watch the progress of the struggle with great interest."[75] Ratan Tata, Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas and J. B. Petit were respectively president, vice-president and secretary of the South African Indian Relief Fund. The Aga Khan, the Nizam of Hyderabad and other ruling princes, besides business magnates, were among the donors. By August 1912, Ratan Tata's personal contribution amounted to £5,000—"a fortune in itself"[76] in those days. During the struggle in 1913, "the river of gold", to use Gandhi's expression, flowed from India.[77] "Then money began to rain from India," said Gandhi.[78] One should not forget this nexus between Gandhi and business magnates and feudals, without which satyagraha could hardly survive.

Lastly, as Gandhi claimed that he knew better than anybody else the art and morality of satyagraha, he assumed sole powers of guiding the movement. Control over huge funds plus his native astuteness made him virtually a dictator. He would formulate the demands, issue detailed instructions, maintain correspondence and carry on negotiations with the enemy, ditch the struggle and reach an agreement with the latter when he would think it opportune. The agreement would be placed before the people as a *fait accompli*.

All these were, among the features of Gandhi's satyagrahas in South Africa as well as those he led afterwards in India.

Gandhi's Home-Coming

As desired by Gokhale, Gandhi returned to India from South Africa via England on 9 January 1915.[79] Gandhi arrived in London on the day World War I broke out. During his brief stay there he raised an Indian volunteer ambulance corps to render "humble assistance" to Britain's imperialist war "as an earnest of our desire to share the responsibilities of membership of this great Empire."[80] The funds raised for the purpose were contributed almost entirely by the Aga Khan, the Gaekwar of Baroda, Ratan Tata and Karimbhoy Adamji Peerbhoy.[81] "I had hoped to improve *my status and that of my people* through the British Empire," wrote Gandhi.[82]

Gandhi's relations with Charles Roberts, then Under-Secretary of State for India, and his wife were "very good", and Roberts took great care of him when he fell ill.[83] It was the Under-Secretary of State who urged him very strongly to return home. "As it is," Roberts said, "I do not regard what you have already done as by any means a mean contribution."[84] At the farewell dinner attended by, among others, the Under-Secretary of State, Gandhi stated that it was *his "dream and hope that the connection between India and England might be a source of spiritual comfort and uplifting to the whole world."*[85] In an interview to *Bombay Chronicle* on the day of his arrival in India, Gandhi acknowledged that he had come before the due date at the promptings of Charles Roberts.

Judith Brown has observed that Gandhi "had to make his mark in 1915 as a middle-aged stranger lacking powerful backers and allies, and without institutional standing in local, provincial or all-India politics."[86] In fact, Gandhi was no stranger : he came back trailing clouds of glory. On his arrival in London he had been given a reception by British and Indian friends, among whom were Lajpat Rai, Jinnah, Sarojini Naidu and other prominent Indians.[87] Tendulkar writes that Gandhi's landing in Bombay "took place, by the permission of the authorities, at the Apollo Bunder—an honour shared with Royalty, by the Viceroys and India's most distinguished sons."[88] On his arrival, Gandhi was accorded a public reception at Jehangir Petit's mansion by the elite of Bombay. Presiding at it, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who together with G.K. Gokhale dominated the Congress at the time, praised him as one who "would combine the greatest qualities of courage and heroism *with the greatest loyalty*."[89]

Gokhale's organization, Servants of India Society, also held a reception in Gandhi's honour in Bombay, which was attended by, among others, a few knights and ladies including Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, a leading millowner and merchant. Welcome was extended to him by the elite at other places too. Sir Dorab Tata, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola and Sir Jamsetji Jeejibhoy presided at meetings in which he spoke on indentured labour.

Besides a biography of Gandhi by H.S.L. Polak, another biography *M. K. Gandhi : An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, by a British clergyman, which carried an introduction by a former acting Viceroy of India, Lord Ampthill, had appeared in London.

Apart from the business and political elite of Bombay and other places, who enthusiastically welcomed Gandhi on his return, welcome was also extended to him by the Government of India with a high honour in the New Year's list of 1915. Viceroy Lord Hardinge conferred on him the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal (first class) for his services in South Africa. One of his first steps on arriving in Bombay was to pay a call on Lord Willingdon, then governor of Bombay, who obtained a promise from him of personal consultation "whenever he proposed to take any steps concerning government."[90] Like the business magnates, the raj, too, seemed eager to nurture him and guide him along the correct rails. In an interview to the press on the eve of Gandhi's departure from London, General Smuts had said :

> "I am convinced that Mr Gandhi is sincerely anxious to come to a fair settlement, and *his power, while it lasts, is an enormous asset to Britain* in its efforts to arrive at a settlement."[91]

On his return to India Gandhi offered his services to the Viceroy and proposed to raise a corps of stretcher-bearers for service in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). In reply, Lord Hardinge assured him that "his presence in India would be of more service than any that he might be able to render abroad."[92] As he afterwards reminded Viceroy Lord Chelmsford's private secretary, he had renewed his "offer to Provincial authorities."[93]

Before and immediately after his return, Gandhi established personal links with the highest British authorities in England and India as well as with the Indian business magnates like Ambalal Sarabhai, Seth Mangaldas, Narottam Morarji, G. D. Birla, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. It was his activities in South Africa that convinced both the raj and the Indian big bourgeoisie of his unique worth: they could realize that this man, while playing the role of a saint for the masses, could as well serve as a reliable brake on their struggle to change the existing order. Though, according to Gokhale, Gandhi's "friend and master", his "actual achievements in South Africa were not as meritorious" as they are usually represented, "his novel *Satyagraha* campaign had aroused the keenest interest and admiration in India, and he was already marked out as one of the political leaders of the future."[94]

While in Africa, Gandhi had been repeatedly asked by Gokhale to return to India and take part in Indian politics. Gandhi had promised to Gokhale that he would "scrupulously observe the compact of silence for one year after my arrival in India."[95] But the master died within a few weeks of Gandhi's return. Soon after, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the other Congress boss, passed away.

In 1915, the split in the Congress between the 'Moderates' and 'Extremists' apparently healed. The Congress, which had been dominated since 1908 by Mehta and Gokhale and their friends, came now to be dominated by Tilak, Annie Besant, a British theosophist, and their followers. Tilak and Besant founded Home Rule Leagues. Though Besant was interned in mid-1917 for about three months, the Home Rulers were not very dangerous people. As Tilak said in his "Home Rule Speech at Belgaum" on 1 May 1916, "Not that we do not want the king, nor that we do not want the English Government, nor that we do not want the Emperor. We want a particular sort of change in the system according to which this administration is carried on and I for one do not think that if that change were made there would arise any danger to the English rule."[96]

It was at the Nehrus' 'Anand Bhawan' at Allahabad in 1916 that the Congress-League Scheme, known as the 'Lucknow Pact', was drawn up and adopted by the Congress and the Muslim League. It set its seal of approval on separate electorates for Muslims, which had first been introduced by the Government of India Act of 1909. It conceded in principle that the Muslims of India were a separate entity having interests separate from those of other Indians. For some time, Gandhi, Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Jinnah and others campaigned for the acceptance by the British government of the Congress-League Scheme, which Gandhi called the 'Swaraj Scheme'.[97]

In the meantime Gandhi had settled down at Ahmedabad where he founded his *ashram* with the generous financial assistance of the Seths, Mangaldas and Ambalal Sarabhai, Ahmedabad's leading millowners. He attended the Congress sessions from 1915, but kept a low profile in Congress politics.

Champaran : 'A bold experiment with Truth and Ahimsa'

It was at the Lucknow Congress at the end of 1916 that Rajkumar Shukla, an unlettered peasant of Champaran, a district in the north-west of Bihar, met Gandhi and persuaded him to agree to pay a visit to the district to see for himself the oppression of the European indigo planters. He had had to pursue Gandhi to different places before Gandhi came to Champaran. Myths have been deliberately invented, which many historians help to spread, that Champaran represented the first triumph of Gandhi s satyagraha on Indian soil, that by his unique methods, he put courage into the hearts of the downtrodden peasantry and banished the scourge of oppression and exploitation. "The Champaran inquiry," as Gandhi himself claimed, "was a bold experiment with Truth and Ahimsa."[98] Rajendra Prasad, the mahatma's chief lieutenant from Bihar, who along with a few other lawyers from Patna assisted him during the inquiry, wrote : "These poor ryots [of Champaran] had been oppressed so often and so long that they had become frightened and spiritless ; so much so that they dared not even whisper a complaint against the powerful planters....The ryots had become so terrorised that they dared not have recourse to law."[99] (About the peasants' lack of courage to go to law courts, Prasad soon contradicted himself).[100]

According to Prasad, the miracle had happened even before Gandhi set foot on Champaran soil. "The fear and the terror," wrote Prasad, "in which they [the ryots] went of the planters and their agents vanished all of a sudden .."[101] Such exercises in myth-making pay scant respect to truth. Prasad blissfully forgot what he had written in *Satyagraha in Champaran*, where he had referred to the long history of peasant struggle against the planters since 1867. The *Report of the Champaran Agrarian Inquiry Committee* (of which Gandhi was a member), which came out in October 1917, also stated :

"On various occasions during the past fifty years, the relations of [European] landlords and tenants and the circumstances attending the growing of indigo in the Champaran district have been the cause of considerable anxiety."[102] It referred, in particular, to the "disturbances" and "agitation" of 1908 and 1912.[103]

In 1917 about 200 Europeans owned indigo concerns and zamindaris in Champaran. They had taken on permanent lease more than half of the district and had themselves become landlords.[104] They had imposed the *tinkathia* system, that is, forced the peasants to cultivate indigo on three *kathas* of land in every *bigha*,[105] though it meant loss to the peasants. Besides, they extorted from them various *abwabs*, that is, illegal cesses.

When, before World War I, the Germans started producing synthetic dyes, indigo manufacture became unprofitable. With the help of an obliging government the European planters released the peasants from the obligation of the *tinkathia* system and forced them to pay enhanced rent (*sharabeshi*) or to make a lump sum cash payment (*tawan*). "These alchemists," wrote Brailsford, "had discovered how to turn not lead, but losses, into gold."[106] In 1908, resistance by the peasants developed into a mass movement, European indigo factories were boycotted and, according to a Bengal Government report of November 1908, there were "numerous acts of violence to factory employees."[107] The *Statesman* of 27 November 1908 reported that there were cases of attack on Europeans, that parts of the division had "assumed a perfectly warlike appearance" and that "large forces of Bengal armed police and Gurkhas" had been sent "to protect the European population."[108]

During the war indigo manufacture became again profitable for the planters and they tried to force the peasants to resume cultivation of indigo. Unrest spread and an explosive situation arose.

Before entering Champaran, Gandhi first saw the Commissioner of the Tirhut division (to which the Champaran district belonged) and the Secretary of the Planters' Association. When he reached Motihari, the district town, he was ordered by the District Magistrate to leave. Expressing his inability to comply with the order, he wrote to the Magistrate that *his "desire is purely and simply for a genuine search for knowledge" and not "agitation"* [109] The same night he wrote to the Private Secretary to Viceroy Chelmsford, recalling "his own long-standing association with the Government and his record of public service." In his letter Gandhi explained that his object was to learn whether there was truth in the allegations of the ryots against the planters. He suggested that the Viceroy might "consider the matter serious enough to have an independent inquiry made. The local administration admit that they are sitting upon a mine so dangerous that they cannot tolerate my presence.... Everything will depend upon swiftness and the proper choice of the members of the Committee of Inquiry."[110] During the same night he wrote several other letters to important people including H. S. L. Polak. Polak, C. F. Andrews, Mazhar-ul-Haque and others rushed to his help. Andrews saw the District Magistrate, other officials as well as indigo planters. The Government of India intervened, and the Government of Bihar overruled and censured local officials, the case against him was withdrawn and he was allowed to conduct his inquiries. He was invited to see the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar, who was quite "impressed by what Gandhiji told him."[111] Later, the Bihar government appointed the Champaran Agrarian Inquiry Committee composed of government officials, representatives of planters and landlords, and Gandhi as the sole representative of the ryots.

In a letter of 15 April 1917, Gandhi wrote to his nephew and co-worker, Maganlal Gandhi : "The situation here is more serious than I had imagined. It seems to be worse than in Fiji and Natal."[112] All his efforts were directed towards keeping the outside world ignorant of the conditions in Champaran. He did not seek the help of the Congress nor did he "acquaint the peasants with the organization called the Congress." As he wrote, he "did not think it proper to invite any leaders from other provinces" and "thus prevented the struggle from assuming a political aspect." In order not "to give it an all-India and political aspect", he was "determined not to appeal to the country at large for funds" and even declined an offer of Rs 15,000 from his rich benefactors in Bombay.[113]

In his "Notes on the Position in Champaran to Date," dated 14 May 1917, Gandhi stated that his desire was "to avoid the publication of a report which is bound to stagger India....The mere narration is calculated to rouse passions and therefore *every effort is being made to bring about a settlement without any public agitation*."[114]

It was Gandhi's mission not to lead an agitation of the peasantry against injustice and oppression but to avert it. While oozing friendliness for the planters and government officials—the oppressors[115]—in a situation which, according to Gandhi, was worse than that in Fiji or Natal he confined the role of the oppressed to having their reports recorded by his Bihari lieutenants, mostly prosperous lawyers. As Dhanagare observes, "his empirical exercises during the inquiry released the steam of popular resentment which otherwise would have certainly found a spontaneous expression into a mass agitation."[116]

In his letter of 4 June 1917 to Maharaja Bahadur Sir Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga, member, Executive Council, Bihar and Orissa, Gandhi said :

"I have no desire, if I can help it, to lead evidence as to the coercive methods adopted by the planters to bend the *raiyats* to their will except in so far as it may be necessary regarding *sharabeshi* and *tawan*. *I am anxious to see cordial relations established between the planters and the raiyats*. And in any inquiry that is the result of a mutual understanding, an investigation into methods of coercion can find no place. ..*This is a domestic quarrel and if it* *is settled in the manner indicated by me, it will create a healthy precedent.*"[117]

Next day, in his "Note on the Situation in Champaran—VI", Gandhi stated : "*Evidence collected is of an inflammatory nature.... The mission has no wish to unnecessarily injure the planters' interest.*"[118]

It was Gandhi who suggested that the inquiry should be private, for it "would be wholly in the planters' interest,"[119] as an open inquiry would expose the sores of the indigo system. Ironically, it was Gandhi, the sole representative of the Champaran peasants on the Inquiry Committee, who also proposed that the Committee should make no reference to the planters' acts of oppression, of which previous official inquiry reports were full. Naturally, his proposal was readily agreed to by the other members of the Committee, "for it saved them all from a very awkward position."[120]

The Committee *unanimously* recommended that the *tinkathia* system should be abolished. "Government officials readily agreed with him [Gandhi]; so did the planters, who realized that it was no use raising an objection, because it was now difficult, if not impossible, to enforce it. They knew that indigo cultivation had proved unprofitable because of the invention of synthetic dyes, and that the temporary phase of prosperity in its cultivation would cease as soon as the war was over."[121]

Earlier, while releasing peasants from the obligation of the *tinkathia* system, the planters had illegally enforced a rent increase of 50 per cent on an average and in some cases 60 per cent or more, though the new Tenancy law allowed no more than 12½ per cent. But Gandhi, the friend and champion of the peasants' interests, agreed "that nearly three-fourths of the enhanced rent [*sharahbeshi*] should be allowed to remain and only about one-fourth of the cash exactions [*tawan*] should be refunded."[122] In some cases *sharahbeshi* was reduced by only 20 per cent.[123] Gandhi also agreed that the peasants would have to pay the old enhanced rent up to *Fasli* 1325 (that is, 1918). In a letter of 1 March 1918 he promised the Lieutenant Governor that he would "strain every nerve to see that the cases[124] are withdrawn."[125]

According to Prasad, critics held "that if the increases in rent were invalid, they should have been cancelled in their entirety; and if the exactions were illegal, the total amount exacted should have been refunded."[126]

The *tinkathia* system affected the rich and middle peasants but the lot of the landless agricultural workers, forced to work in indigo factories and farms of the planters *on wages less than market rates*, was the worst—a problem which was not unknown to the mahatma. This question was never raised by him and the Champaran Agrarian Inquiry Committee, as Dhanagare writes, "disposed of the question of agrarian labour wages in a short paragraph in a chapter on 'other grievances'."[127] The Champaran Agrarian Bill 1917, which received Gandhi's approval, did not propose to enforce wages at local market rates in the planters' farms and factories.

It would be wrong to think that the Champaran peasants enthusiastically welcomed the manner in which their "domestic quarrel" with the planters was settled. The letter of 17 November 1917 from J. T. Whitty, manager of the Bettiah Raj, a big European zamindari, to the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division is somewhat illuminating. Whitty wrote:

> "...I hear it on good authority that in cases where he [Gandhi] has given directions of which the *raiyats* disapprove they have refused to obey him. I am told for instance that in the Tarkaulia *Dehat* when Mr Gandhi advised the *raiyats* that they should pay *sharahbeshi* less than 20 per cent agreed on, they said definitely that they would do no such thing and are now saying 'who is Gandhi?'..."[128]

To quote Dhanagare, "The whole Gandhian effort then in effect simply legitimised the enhancement of rent, and at least in this sense helped to preserve a feudal arrangement and planters' domination under which the agitating *raiyats* were bound to pay higher rents for several years to come."[129]

In a resolution on the Champaran Agrarian Inquiry Committee Report, the Government of Bihar and Orissa commended "with much pleasure the good sense and moderation shown by Mr Gandhi, who represented the cause of the tenants on the Committee."[130]

Like his South African satyagraha, Gandhi's Champaran experiment confirmed that, if properly nursed, his leadership could, indeed, be an asset to the raj, British expatriate capital and its domestic allies. To quote Dhanagare again, "From the very beginning the British Government were thinking in terms of benefits they could possibly draw from Gandhi's manner of handling political agitation and problem situations and this attitude, for which Gandhi's role in South Africa was largely responsible, was reflected in local officials' intelligence and other reports on Champaran."[131]

The Secretary of State for India appreciated Gandhi's role and wrote : "He has just been helping the Government to find a solution for the grievances of the indigo labour in Bihar."[132]

The mahatma, too, could justifiably claim in his letter to the Viceroy : "...Champaran and Kaira affairs are my direct, definite and special contribution to the war."[133]

In total disregard of all facts, the Prasads, Nehrus and historians, with a few exceptions, have extolled the Champaran agreement as a great triumph. For instance, Prasad felt no qualms to proclaim : "...the Government ultimately yielded to all that the tenancy of Champaran had been demanding..."[134] Nehru wrote that Gandhi's "adventures and victory in Champaran, on behalf of the tenants of the planters, filled us with enthusiasm. We saw that he was prepared to apply his methods in India also and they promised success."[135]

The "Marxist" theoretician, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, is no less appreciative. "The Champaran struggle", he writes, "is of great importance, firstly, because it was directed against the European planters ; ...thirdly, because, despite stiff opposition by the European planters and their protectors in the bureaucracy, Gandhiji and his comrades were able to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion."[136]

The Congress leaders could thrive because of the bankruptcy of the so-called Communist leaders.

Experiment with Labour

The owners of the Ahmedabad textile mills had been paying their workers since 1916 a plague bonus, which rose to 70 per cent of their wages, to prevent the flight of labour during an epidemic. Early in February 1918 the millowners decided to withdraw the bonus. On the other hand, in view of the abnormal rise in prices during the war, the workers demanded a 50 per cent rise in their wages in lieu of the bonus. While rejecting the demand of the workers, the millowners offered a 20 per cent increase.

Between 1914 and 1918, the prices of the necessaries of life, like food, cloth and kerosene, almost doubled while "the textile mills earned immense profits for the mill agents."[137]

Ambalal Sarabhai, Ahmedabad's leading millowner and Gandhi's benefactor, met Gandhi in Bombay, told him of the unrest among the workers and asked him to intervene.[138] Gandhi, who "enjoyed very close and cordial relations with the millowners",[139] accepted Sarabhai's invitation.

At the mahatma's persuasion the workers agreed to reduce their demand to an increase of 35 per cent in the wage—half of what they had been receiving as plague bonus. The millowners declared a lock-out. As proposed by Gandhi, whom they accepted as their leader, the workers took the pledge "that they will not resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured" and "that they will not, during the period of the lock-out, cause any disturbance or resort to violence or indulge in looting, nor damage any property of the employers or abuse anyone, but will remain peaceful."[140] The workers' leaders, chief among whom were Gandhi and Ambalal Sarabhai's sister, Anasuya Sarabhai, also took the pledge: "If in this struggle any persons are reduced to starvation and are unable to get work, we shall feed and clothe them before we feed and clothe ourselves."[141]

Gandhi addressed a meeting of the workers every day and issued a daily leaflet dinning into the ears of the workers the moral precepts that they should remain non-violent under all circumstances, refrain from doing any damage to their employers' property, permit blacklegs to replace them, refuse to accept outside aid, etc. Speaking on 4 March 1918 to the workers who were suffering bitter privations, Gandhi said:

"Just as our workers [in South Africa] did not take advantage of the difficulties of the Government of South Africa, created by the strike of the European workers, but earned praise for themselves by suspending their campaign and thereby helping the Government, in the same way we should not seek to harass the millowners by taking advantage of any sudden crisis in their affairs but should run to their rescue."[142]

Gandhi's rich stores of such higher morality were reserved for the uplift of the oppressed and the exploited and not wasted on his friends and benefactors.

The lock-out that began on 22 February 1918 dragged on as the employers expected that the workers, whose manners had become perfect under the mahatma's influence, would ultimately be forced by starvation to surrender. His gentle entreaties to the millowners to come to a compromise were unavailing.[143] Ambalal Sarabhai, who represented the millowners,[144] would come to dine with him but proved, as Gandhi said, the most stubborn opponent."[145] When, after the lock-out was lifted, Seth Ambalal complained to him in a very confidential letter (which as well as Gandhi's reply to it was immediately destroyed) that undue pressure was being put on willing workers to prevent them from joining, Gandhi assured him that he had already issued instructions not to use such pressure and that he himself was ready "to escort any worker who says he wants to attend the mill." "I am altogether indifferent," added Gandhi, "whether a labourer joins or does not join."[146] At this time he was ready to help a worker to break his pledge but soon after, as we shall see, the pledge assumed tremendous significance to him.

When three weeks of lock-out and strike had passed, hunger and misery wrought their effect on the workers, which Gandhi's moral exhortations could hardly overcome. Their refusal to attend his meeting one morning was accompanied with the taunt: "What is it to Anasuyabehn and Gandhiji? They come and go in their car, they eat sumptuous food, but we are suffering death-agonies; attending meetings does not prevent starvation."[147]

This was a serious situation for the mahatma. The workers' refusal to attend his meeting even when approached and the bitter taunt meant loss of his image and of influence on the workers in the textile city where he had pitched his *ashram*. It indicated a setback for his creed of class collaboration, which the friendly business magnates heeded not his appeals to prevent. So he announced on

15 March that he would go on a fast[148] from the next day to prevent the workers from committing a grave sin—a calamity like the "certain annihilation of *dharma*"—the breaking of their pledge and loss of faith in God.

Gandhi was very much perturbed at the prospect of the workers' breaking their pledge and attending mills without waiting for a 35 per cent rise in their wages. But he was little concerned about the violation of the pledge that he and his close associate Anasuya Sarabhai had taken—that they would not feed themselves before the workers were fed. The day he went on fast, he shifted to his *ashram* from Anasuya Sarabhai's house, where he had been staying.[149]

The fast led to a happy settlement, at least for the millowners. On 17 March they told Gandhi that they would give 35 per cent for his sake, but the mahatma felt that this would amount to coercion on them—something quite unacceptable to him. Already he had written to Ambalal Sarabhai proposing "35 per cent on the first day ; 20 per cent on the second day and, on the third, what the arbitration decides." For fear that the whole thing might appear to the "simple-minded" workers as "*calculated deception*", Gandhi wanted that the arbitrator should make his decision and the "wage for the third day should be announced this very day."[150] Ultimately, it was decided that the workers would receive an increase of 27½ per cent from the third day, pending the arbitrator's award.

Thus, through an increase of 35 per cent *only* for the first day of resuming their work, the mahatma saved the workers from breaking their pledge. After he had forced the terms of settlement on them, he said to them : "What I have brought for you is enough to fulfil the letter of the pledge, but not its spirit. *Spirit does not mean much to us* and so we must rest content with the letter."[151]

The settlement was hailed by Gandhi as a victory for both the parties. He wanted to do away with all strikes and insisted that all serious disputes should be settled not by resort to a strike but by arbitration. Later, a Permanent Arbitration Board was set up, to which all workers' complaints were referred after passing through various stages. The Board consisted of two nominees, one representing the employers and the other the workers. Gandhi, as the *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India 1931*, stated, had been representing the workers since the beginning. The Report said: "Of the complaints [of the workers] pending at the beginning of 1929, 50 were said to have been outstanding since 1922." The Commission, of which G. D. Birla was a member, also noted: "Most of the Mussalman weavers are outside the labour union [Ahmedabad Labour Association set up by Gandhi]."[152]

While advising workers to rule out strikes and go in for arbitration in case of a serious dispute, Gandhi warned them that they should not "harass the employers for trifles." As regards the pay for the period of the lock-out, the mahatma admonished the workers: "Such demand would amount to our having fought the struggle with the employers' money. The workers should be ashamed to entertain such an idea." He advised them to "note that their condition hereafter will depend on the quality of their work. If they work sincerely, obediently and with energy, they will win the employers' goodwill and be helped by them in a great many ways....their interests will be best served if they look upon the employers as their parents and approach them for all that they want."[153]

Another Satyagraha

While Gandhi was still in Champaran, the peasants of Kheda or Kaira district in his native Gujarat had started an agitation for reduction in land revenue on account of failure of crops. The Gujarat Sabha supported the demand of the peasants for postponement of land revenue collection and appealed to the government early in January 1918 to grant exemption in some cases and postponement in others.[154]

According to the Revenue Code, postponement could be granted if the crop was 25 per cent or less of the normal yield. Gandhi and his colleagues personally investigated the conditions in a number of villages and claimed that the crops had actually been 25 per cent or less. Deputations to the Commissioner of the Northern Division and to the Bombay Governor—to the latter by Gandhi, Sir D. E. Wacha (who soon became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council) and Vithalbhai Patel—proved fruitless.[155]

In his letter of 28 February 1918 to F. G. Pratt, the Commissioner, Gandhi explained his mission : "A new order of things is replacing the old," but civil servants like Pratt wanted to do good to the people, "not by right of love, but by the force of fear." That is why the gulf was widening between the government and the people. Gandhi did "presumptuously believe that *I can step into the breach* and may succeed in stopping harmful disturbances during our passage to the new state of things. *I want, at the end of it, to see established not mutual distrust and the law of force, but natural trust and the law of love.*"[156]

In mid-March 1918, Gandhi appealed to the Bombay governor seeking postponement of recovery of land revenue or appointment of an independent board to inquire into the grievances of the peasants. C. F. Andrews also took up the work in the Kheda district.[157]

When all appeals failed, Kheda satyagraha was inaugurated on 22 March. At the instance of Gandhi, the Kheda satyagrahis took the pledge (drafted by him) that they would "not pay the assessment for the year whether it be wholly or in part," that if 'the Government would graciously postpone for all the remaining villages collection of the balance of the revenue, we, who can afford it, would be prepared to pay up revenue, whether it be in full or in part."[158] While conducting the satyagraha, Gandhi utilized the services of Vithalbhai Patel, Dinshaw Wacha, Sir Gokuldas Parekh and M. A. Jinnah, then a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, to arrive at a negotiated settlement, but the Government was unyielding.

In his Circular on the Kheda situation, dated 27 March 1918, Gandhi assured the satyagrahis : "Many leading gentlemen are ready to assist the people in this struggle, and even if anyone is turned out of house and home, arrangements have been made for his food and lodging."[159] Rich Gujaratis were very much interested in this 'novel experiment' and gave generous financial assistance—more than what was needed.[160]

Despite all this support, "within only a fortnight," writes

Dhanagare, "the movement showed signs of collapsing." Interestingly, on 10 April 1918, Gandhi saw the Collector of Ahmedabad and offered his services for promoting army recruitment in Gujarat.[161] On the same day, he wrote to J. L. Maffey, private secretary to the Viceroy, that he was "engaged in a *domestic quarrel with the local authorities* on the Kheda crops" and hoped that the peasants' grievances would be removed.[162]

By 17 April, that is, in less than a month, "about 80 per cent of the farmers," according to Gandhi, "have paid up the dues."[163] Significantly, he was now indifferent to the violations of their pledge by most satyagrahis : and, on the same day, he issued instructions to the volunteers :

"The volunteers must remember that this is a holy war....We are opposing the intoxication of power, that is, the blind application of law, and *not authority as such. The difference must never be lost sight of.* It is, therefore, our duty to help the officers in their other work." *He asked them to "think of the Government and the people as constituting a large family and act accordingly.*"[164]

On 30 April, while placing his services at the disposal of the authorities to be utilized by them in any manner they chose, Gandhi wrote to the private secretary to the Viceroy :

"*I desire relief regarding the Kaira trouble*....It will also enable me to fall back for war purposes upon my co-workers in Kaira and *it may enable me to get recruits from the district....I suggest that action in this matter be taken as a war measure. This will obviate the fear of the relief being regarded as a precedent.*"[165]

Quite significantly, the mahatma prayed to the Viceroy for relief for the Kheda satyagrahis not because the demand was just but because it would help him to overcome the 'trouble' and enable him to serve better British imperialism's war efforts. He assured the Viceroy that it would not be treated as a precedent ;

Though, on 6 May, Gandhi wrote that "only a small number [were] left to collect [revenue dues from" and that "in many cases a quarter of the assessment has been exacted as a penalty", he went round claiming at different public meetings in his characteristic style that "the result of their struggle was a nearly complete, if not a complete victory."[166]

The Kheda movement was bound to fail despite many advantages like the patronage of very influential persons and more than adequate funds. As Dhanagare observes, it had no mass popular support. The members of the backward classes and scheduled castes, who worked on the lands of the Patidar peasants as sub-tenants, share-croppers and farm workers, constituted nearly 26 per cent of the agricultural population in the Kheda district, and the Patidar land-owners could not rally their support behind them. Moreover, the richer section of the peasants refused to take part in the movement.[167] Most others refused to respect their satyagraha vow when prayers and petitions, accompanied with brave talks, proved unavailing. By 6 June, when the satyagraha was formally withdrawn, at least 92 per cent of the revenue dues, besides substantial amounts of fines, had been paid.

It was on 25 April 1918, the day the Viceroy opened the War Conference in Delhi, in which Gandhi supported unreservedly the resolution on recruitment, that "orders were issued to Mamlatdars in the Northern Division not to recover land revenue from those unable to pay."[168] Replying to Gandhi in early June, the Collector of the Kaira district informed him formally of these orders. Immediately, in their joint letter of 6 June 1918 to the people of Kheda, announcing the end of the satyagraha and acknowledging that 'only 8 per cent of the assessment' remained unpaid, the mahatma and Vallabhbhai Patel said :

"By their courage the people of Kaira have drawn the attention of the whole of India. During the last six months they have had full taste of the fruits of observing truth, fearlessness, unity, determination and self-sacrifice... It is our firm belief that the people of Kaira have *truly served their own cause, as well as the cause of swaraj and the Empire.*"[169] Indeed, according to Gandhi and Patel, the cause of swaraj and the cause of the empire were far from being incompatible.

Interestingly, Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay, wrote :

"He [Gandhi] has taken a bad fall over the Kaira business. We had collected 93 per cent of the assessment, and, when he saw the game was up, he and Patel ! issued a joint manifesto to say that

Government had given a concession and so the passive resistance movement might cease. We gave *no* concession and my Commissioner tells me that Gandhi's assertion that he knew nothing of our orders to the Mamlatdars in April and May is a barefaced lie."[170]

Like other movements led by Gandhi the Kheda struggle is acclaimed in history as one of the crowning glories of Gandhi's unique satyagraha technique. As soon as the Kheda satyagraha fizzled out, preparations were made in Bombay to honour the mahatma publicly for his "success" and "the underlying motive of the move was to advertise the advantages of a passive resistance which Gandhi had introduced in the Indian political movement."[171]

NOTES

1 Quoted in Tendulkar, op cit, II, 838.
2 See Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (cited hereafter as *Satyagraha*), 22.
3 *CWG*, I, 162.
4 Ibid, 177.
4a Ibid, 299.
5 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 96.
6 Ibid, 105.
7 H. S. L. Polak *et al*, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 40-1 ; *CWG*, XII, 683-4.
8 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 191.
9 *CWG*, III (1979 edn.), 431, 438 ; see also 398.
10 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 192.
11 Polak *et al*, op cit, 69 ; Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 245-7.
12 Polak *et al*, op cit, 64-5.
13 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 209 ; see also Polak *et al*, op cit, 71-2.
14 Ibid, 74.
15 Ibid, 66.
16 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 5.
17 Ibid, 56, 61, 67, 106.
18 Polak *et al*, 81.
19 Ibid, 82. To quote Gandhi, "...thus far this class [indentured labourers] had been kept out of the fray....Thus far Satyagraha had not been so much as mentioned among the indentured labourers..." (*Satyagraha*, 278). There were 60,000 indentured, 10,000 ex-indentured and 10,000 free Indians in Natal; see ibid, 30. Gandhi's satyagraha was actually confined within a small fraction of the population; the more militant sections were deliberately "kept out of the fray".
20 *CWG*, XII, 660.

21 Ibid, 652.
22 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 274.
23 *CWG*, XII, 554.
24 Ibid, 575.
25 Polak *et al*, op cit, 84.
26 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 289, 290, 298, 300.
27 Ibid, 297.
28 Polak *et al*, op cit, 86-7.
29 Ibid, 87.
30 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 316.
31 Tendulkar, op cit, I, 151 ; Penderel Moon, *Gandhi and Modern India*, 54.
32 *CWG*, XII, 296.
33 Ibid, XIV, 180.
34 Ibid, XII, 647.
35 Ibid, 602-3.
36 Polak *et al*, op cit, 89.
37 *CWG*, XII, 272.
38 Ibid, 598.
39 Ibid, 294.
40 Ibid, 295.
41 Ibid, 299.
42 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 323.
43 *CWG*, XII, 295-6. See also his message to the South African Minister of the Interior, dated 29 Dec. 1914 (Ibid, 302-3).
44 Ibid, 299–300.
45 See ibid, XII.
46 Ibid, 660.
47 Ibid, 297.
48 Ibid, 307.
49 Ibid, 304.
50 Ibid, 663.
51 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 325.
52 *Pretoria News*, 9 Jan. 1914 ; cited in *CWG*, XII, 323—emphasis in the original.
53 Ibid, 614.
54 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 325.
55 *CWG*, XII, 334, fn. 1.
56 See, for instance, Ibid, XIV, 286, where he describes the European railway workers' struggle as a struggle for capture of power and, hence, for "Satanic justice."
57 Ibid, XII, 296, 303, 420, 609.
58 Ibid, 328.
59 Ibid, 335-6.
60 Ibid, 396, 399.
61 Ibid, 483, 500.
62 Ibid, 448 ; see also 438-9.

63 Ibid, 446.
64 Ibid, 437, 447.
65 Ibid, 477.
66 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 332.
67 *CWG*, XII, 349-50.
68 Ibid, 439, fn. 1.
69 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 338.
70 *CWG*, XII, 441, 448, 475, 594 ; XIII, 1-2, 111.
71 Ibid, XII, 483.
72 See Polak *et al*, 33-4.
73 *CWG*, XII, 446.
74 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 291.
75 Tendulkar, op cit, I, 112.
76 *CWG*, XI, 299.
77 Gandhi, *Satyagraha*, 287.
78 Tendulkar, op cit, IV, 336.
79 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 210.
80 *CWG*, XII, 528.
81 Ibid, 536n., 563.
82 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 213.
83 *CWG*, XII, 562.
84 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 219.
85 *CWG*, XII, 564n., 565.
86 Brown, *Modern India*, 203.
87 *CWG*, XII, 523, fn. 1.
88 Tendulkar, op cit, I, 157.
89 Ibid, 158.
90 *CWG*, XIII, 9, 156.
91 Quoted in Tendulkar, op cit, III, 173-4.
92 Palme Dutt, op cit, 275 ; *CWG*, XIV, 361.
93 Ibid.
94 See Moon, op cit, 63.
95 *CWG*, XII, 360.
96 Tilak, *His Writings and Speeches*, 115.
97 See, for instance, Congress-League Address to the Secretary of State and the Viceroy on 26 Nov. 1917, *CWG*, XIV, 521-4, 555.
98 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 253.
99 Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter cited as *At the Feet*), 6, 7.
100 Ibid, 67.
101 Ibid, 7.
102 *CWG*, XIII, 573.
103 Ibid, 579.
104 D. N. Dhanagare, *Agrarian Movements and Gandhian Politics*, 92-3.
105 1 standard bigha = $\frac{5}{8}$ acre ; 1 katha = $\frac{1}{20}$ bigha.
106 Polak *et al*, op cit, 120.

107 B. B. Misra, *Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi's Movement in Champaran, 1917-18*, Patna, 1963, 15-16 ; cited in Gyanendra Pandey, *The Congress and the Nation, c. 1917-1947*, 6-7.

108 Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, 44 ; cited in Gyanendra Pandey, *The Congress and the Nation*, 7.

109 *CWG*, XIII, 367.

110 Ibid, 368-9.

111 Prasad, *At the Feet*, 57.

112 *CWG*, XIII, 363.

113 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 250, 252, 253.

114 *CWG*, XIII, 396.

115 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 250, 254 ; Prasad, *At the Feet*, 69.

116 Dhanagare, op cit, 25.

117 *CWG*, XIII, 435, 436.

118 Ibid, 445.

119 Gandhi's telegram to the Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bihar, 8 June 1917, *CWG*, XIII, 439 ; see also 445.

120 Prasad, *At the Feet*, 65.

121 Ibid, 66.

122 Ibid, 66, 67.

123 *CWG*, XIII, 578.

124 A number of law suits in which peasants had contested the legality of the *sharahbeshi* enhancement.

125 *CWG*, XIV, 228-9 ; also 228, fn. 3.

126 Prasad, *At the Feet*, 68.

127 Dhanagare, op cit, 28.

128 *CWG*, XIV, 381 ; see also Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 81.

129 Dhanagare, op cit, 26-7.

130 *CWG*, XIV, 564.

131 Dhanagare, op cit, 26.

132 Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, London, 1930, 58 ; quoted in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 83.

133 Gandhi to Viceroy, 29 Apr. 1918, *CWG*, XIV, 379.

134 Prasad, *At the Feet*, 27.

135 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 35.

136 Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, 20-1.

137 K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", in R. Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, 131.

138 *CWG*, XIV, 185, fn. 3.

139 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 263.

140 *CWG*, XIV, 215.

141 Ibid, 227 ; 227, fn. 1 ; 217, fn. 2 ; 214.

142 Ibid, 237.

143 Ibid, 229, 243.

144 Ibid, 236.

145 Ibid, 241.

146 Ibid, 260.

147 Ibid, 266, fn. 2.

148 According to the District Magistrate's report, it was the workers' taunt that goaded Gandhi to undertake the fast; see Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 118.

149 *CWG*, XIV, 568; also 260.

150 Ibid, 264.

151 Ibid, 268.

152 GOI, *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India 1931*, 336-7.

153 *CWG*, XIV, 270-2.

154 Ibid, 144, fn. 2.

155 Ibid, 182, fn. 2; 184, fn. 2, 3.

156 Ibid, 225-6.

157 Ibid, 269, 273.

158 Ibid, 279.

159 Ibid, 292.

160 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 266.

161 Dhanagare, op cit, 35, 39.

162 *CWG*, XIV, 320.

163 Ibid, 345.

164 Ibid, 350.

165 Ibid, 360-1.

166 Ibid, 390-1, 395, 400, 403.

167 Dhanagare, op cit, 37-8.

168 *CWG*, XIV, 460.

169 Ibid, 416-9.

170 Willingdon to Chelmsford, 11/12 June 1918, I. O. L., Willingdon Papers, MSS. EUR. F93(1); cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 111.

171 An intelligence report, dt. 8 June 1918, in the Govt. of Maharashtra, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, III, Bombay, 1965, 96; cited in Dhanagare, op cit, 46.

CHAPTER FIVE

JALLIANWALLA BAGH TO CHAURI-CHAURA

1. *Oppression and Resistance*

The period immediately before and after the end of World War I saw mass unrest sweeping the country. By 1916, as Viceroy Chelmsford said, India had been bled "absolutely white."[1] During the war more than ten lakh Indian soldiers were recruited for duty overseas. In the Punjab press-gang methods were widely used during the recruiting campaign. People were forced to make contributions to the War Fund. As Tomlinson says, besides "minting vast numbers of 'new silver rupees' and contracting war loans, the Government of India raised "its revenue by 16 per cent in 1916-17, by a further 14 per cent in 1917-18 and by a further 10 per cent in 1918-19."[2] The cost of maintaining the rapidly growing Indian army for service overseas and the additional British contingents which joined the British Indian army in 1918 was met by the Indian budget.

Besides, India was forced to export large quantities of food, equipment and strategical raw materials. Even rails were uprooted here and exported for building railways in Mesopotamia and for producing armaments The financial contributions that India was forced to make as 'voluntary gifts' were also crippling. In 1917 India made a 'voluntary gift' of £100 million and in 1918 another 'gift' of £45 million. While the impoverished Indian people were made to pay for the 'voluntary' gifts, this brought indirect gain for the Indian cotton millowners, then constituting the predominant section of the Indian big bourgeoisie. To oblige them, the tariff on imports of Lancashire piecegoods was raised from 3½ to 7½ per cent. To quote Clive Dewey, "The new concordat—a 7½ per cent cotton duty for a £100 million 'war gift'—was announced simultaneously in the Indian Legislative Council and the House of Commons on 1 March 1917. The Indian councillors greeted the cotton duties with applause, the £100 million with silence."[3] The

7½ cotton duty was the raj's 'war gift' to the Indian big bourgeoisie as a reward for its exuberant loyalty. India emerged out of World War I with a national debt of £370 million and severe financial problems.

The raj's measures to bleed the Indian people white were compounded by the reckless profiteering and swindling by the Indian big bourgeoisie. Prices of the necessities of life like food, cloth and kerosene almost doubled while the earnings of the peasants, especially poor and landless peasants, the overwhelming majority of the rural population, fell and the wages of factory workers rose only marginally. Speaking of 1918 and the following two years, Gadgil writes that the annual average prices of cotton manufacture "were three times as much as the prices in 1914," while wages "lagged seriously behind."[4] The grip of the traders and money-lenders on the peasants became stronger than before. During the war as well as immediately after it, peasant land tended to pass into the hands of the rural sharks. As a result of the impoverishment, the lives of some 14 million people were swept away by an influenza epidemic at the end of the war.[5]

While it was the worst of times for the people, it was the best of times for the big bourgeoisie. Profits from industry, trade and speculation soared beyond the most avaricious dreams of this class. Citing several sources James Masselos points out that the gross profits of the Bombay cotton mills reached 99·7 per cent in 1919.[6] D. H. Buchanan refers, as a typical instance, to the Sholapur Cotton Mill which offered dividends of 42·5 per cent in 1916 and 100 per cent in 1917.[7] The profits of a mill company, publicly admitted, were rather peanuts compared to the open and clandestine gains made by the mill's managing agents. In Calcutta, European-managed jute mills also made fabulous profits.[8] Referring to the profits of the jute mills, Omkar Goswami writes: "By 1918, three-figure net profit rates had become the order of the day ...Such performances extended to the trading sector and to the sphere of speculation." The traders, mainly Marwaris, "did very well for themselves by simultaneously maximising the trading and *fatka* profits."[9] They so manoeuvred as to permanently depress the price of raw jute and minted gold out of the sweat and tears of the producers. As we have noted in Chapter Two, speculation and gambling on the different commodities markets and on the stock exchange raised their profits to dizzy heights. The Indian big bourgeois, commercial agents of British capital and gamblers, prospered during the war as never before.

To forestall anti-British struggles and to crush them if they still broke out, the raj prepared during the war itself to adopt a 'carrot and stick' policy. Reference has already been made to Secretary of State Edwin Montagu's declaration of August 1917, which was intended to associate new collaborators with the imperialist cause. Directed by the British cabinet, Montagu came to India to attract collaborators. As he noted in his diary, "I have kept India quiet for six months at a critical period of the war; I have set the politicians thinking of nothing else but my mission."[10] During his visit to India, he and the Viceroy "looked for collaborators" but "found a motley crew of suppliants" and "were besieged by petitioners,"[11] among whom was Gandhi. The appointment of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-8 also aimed at, among other things, attracting Indian collaborators.

On the other hand, the British raj appointed in 1917 what is known as the Rowlatt Committee to "investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India" and "to advise as to the legislation, if any, necessary to enable Government to deal effectively with them."[12] The raj was preparing for the post-war days when the Defence of India Act would automatically lapse. By appointing the Rowlatt Committee, the government wanted to assume necessary powers to combat during the post-war period a resurgence of revolutionary activity which it anticipated.

While politicians like Gandhi were busy contributing to the government's war efforts in different ways and hoping of "a new order of things" without trouble and disorder, the people were trying to resist the offensives of the raj and its domestic allies in different parts of the sub-continent.

We have seen that in Champaran peasant discontent was brewing when Gandhi chose to intervene. In South India, for several months of 1918, there "was a spate of looting and grain riots which", as David Arnold writes, "like the influenza, left hardly a town or district of the province [Madras] untouched." Wage labourers, workers, fishermen, handloom weavers and other working people were in the van of the struggle against those who condemned them to starvation and slow death. When the businessmen, including the Bombay and Ahmedabad mill magnates, exploited fully the conditions of scarcity, withheld stocks and charged highly inflated prices for necessities of life like food, cloth and kerosene, when speculation and gambling ruled the markets, the poor people attacked grain bazaars and warehouses in the Madras city and most of the districts of the Madras Presidency. Only by use of repressive measures—arrest, firing, etc.—the government was able to reimpose control.[13]

In Bengal, too, there were many cases of *hat* and bazaar looting. In Midnapur alone there were at least eleven recorded cases of *hat*-looting. In Midnapur it was the *adivasis* who took the lead ; they were joined by Lodhas, Muslims and so-called low-caste Hindus. Cloth shops were the special targets ; their owners, mainly Marwaris, were also money-lenders.[14] Cases of *hat* and bazaar looting occurred also in the districts of 24 Parganas, Jessore, Khulna, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Noakhali and Chittagong.[15]

Peasant struggles on agrarian issues were also breaking out. A peasant movement, "anterior to and independent of" (to quote Gandhi's words) non-co-operation, swept some districts of Awadh (formerly Oudh)—Rae Bareli, Faizabad, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh.[16]

The different industrial centres witnessed a wave of strikes by factory workers. We have already seen that in the beginning of 1918 the textile workers of Ahmedabad went on strike in which Gandhi intervened at the request of the textile magnates only to curb the militancy of the workers. In Bombay, about 125,000 out of 140,000 workers employed in the textile industry participated in a heroic strike that began at the end of 1918. The lead of the textile workers was followed by workers at the dockyards of the Royal Indian Marine, railway workers and other sections of Bombay's labour and by the Mehtas or subordinate employees working in commercial firms.[17] In 1919 and early 1920 the wave spread to

Kanpur, Jamalpur, Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Sholapur; Lahore, Madras and other centres of industry. There was a resurgence of working class struggle in Bombay and Ahmedabad in January-February and May 1920 respectively. In the first half of 1920 one million and a half workers were engaged in the strike-battle. Though there were hardly any trade unions anywhere, the factory workers were on the march everywhere.[18]

In these days the old Punjab was seething with discontent. The press-gang methods of recruitment and forced extortions of 'donations' for the War Fund had created an explosive situation. Volumes VI and VII of the *Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee*, popularly known as the Hunter Committee, which remained secret for many years and have recently been published in India, suggest that the Punjab Government was haunted by the spectre of a rebellion. First, it felt alarmed at the spread of discontent within the army, a large part of which consisted of recruits from the Punjab. In their evidence Punjab Governor O' Dwyer and the chief secretary of the Punjab, Thompson, referred to the revolutionary propaganda among the soldiers—the anti-British leaflets distributed among them. They were also greatly afraid of the Ghadr revolutionaries. As O' Dwyer said, "eight to ten thousand Sikhs who had returned from the U.S.A. were under the influence of the Ghadr Party, most of whom had been active members of the revolutionary movement, and the Government was afraid that they might again take part in revolutionary movement."[19]

Besides, the treatment meted out by Britain and other victorious powers to Turkey, humbled in the war, and to its Sultan was causing disaffection among a section of the Muslims. The victorious Russian revolution was also a nightmare to the raj as it was afraid that it set a very bad example to the Indian people.[20]

2. *Rowlatt Satyagraha*

B. B. Misra writes that "in a letter to the Viceroy the Secretary of State for India himself described *the Indian situation as naturally influenced by all the world being 'in a state of revolution'*."[21] In a letter written in June 1919, Gandhi observed that "economic distress, political repression and an awakening among the masses" had caused "unrest of a deep-seated character" all over the world. Speaking of India, he said that "it is an all-round unrest due to repression, famine and other causes." What was his panacea for it ? He wrote : "...if the rapidly widespread growth of Bolshevism which is attacking one nation after another in Europe was to be successfully arrested in India, and *even any possibility of its finding a congenial soil safeguarded against*, it was necessary that the people of India should be reminded of the legacy of their civilization and culture, which is comprised in one word 'satyagraha'—the highest *mantra* one can know of."[22] In the new situation Gandhi proposed to use his *mantra* of satyagraha not to remove the causes of the "unrest of a deep-seated character" but to lay the spectre of all revolutionary, anti-imperialist struggle.

On the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee, the Government of India drafted two bills to replace the Defence of India Act. Their object was the same as the mahatma's—to avert and, if necessary, to suppress revolutionary outbreaks. On 6 February 1919 Jinnah warned the Government in the Imperial Legislative Council that, if the Rowlatt Bills were passed, "You will create in the country from one end to the other a discontent and agitation, the like of which you have not witnessed."[23] Despite the opposition of all the Indian members of the Council except one, who was a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, one of the two bills giving the government draconian powers—the right to arrest, search and imprison any person without trial, to establish special courts, etc. (a legislation not quite harsh compared to what prevails today) – became law on 18 March 1919.

Gandhi was in sympathy with the spirit of the legislation ; *he considered its object* "*laudable*." His objection was only to the form. Later, he told the Hunter Committee that the proper course should have been for the Viceroy to use his powers of emergency legislation, that is, to issue ordinances "in order to stamp out anarchy" instead of enacting the Rowlatt Act. He argued : "This anarchy proper has been confined to Bengal' with an outburst here and there, "but after all Bengal is not India." He added that he "would not underrate the significance of it" and that *it was "serious enough to warrant strong Government measures"*. *He held that "The* *conditions in Bengal were such as made the adoption of such strong measures necessary.*"[24]

The initiative for launching an agitation against the Rowlatt bills came not from Gandhi but from Home Rule Leaguers.[25] As Owen writes, branches of the Home Rule Leagues, especially of Mrs Annie Besant's League, began to hold protest meetings against the bills in different cities and towns in January and February 1919. At a large meeting held in Bombay on 16 February, B. G. Horniman, the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* and Vice-President of the Bombay branch of Besant's Home Rule League, pressed for a satyagraha campaign. Prodded by them, Gandhi agreed on 24 February to start a satyagraha campaign against the legislation and drafted a satyagraha pledge.[26] It was the branches of the Home Rule Leagues which, through meetings, leaflets, posters, etc., carried on propaganda against the Rowlatt bills and publicized Gandhi's pledge (though Mrs Besant herself did not approve of the proposed satyagraha). Support came also from the Khilafatists.

On 24 February, the day the decision was made to start satyagraha in the event of the Rowlatt bills becoming law, Gandhi sent "an humble but strong appeal" to the Viceroy "to reconsider Government's decision to proceed with the Bills." It was not difficult for Gandhi to sense the mood of the people. As he wrote afterwards, "I observed, too, that the opposition to them [the bills] was universal among Indians. . I felt, too, that the oncoming agitation needed a definite direction, if it was neither to collapse nor to run into violent channels."[27] On 25 February, assuring Sir D.E. Wacha that he would do nothing in haste, Gandhi wrote :

"I think the growing generation will not be satisfied with petitions, etc. We must give them something effective. Satyagraha is the only way, it seems to me, to stop terrorism."[28]

On the same day, Gandhi wrote to K. Natarajan, editor of *The Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay :

"...You may not agree with me as to the remedy to be applied.... If you do not provide the rising generation an effective remedy against the excesses of authority, you will let loose the powers of vengeance and the doctrines of the Little Bengal Cult of violence will spread with a rapidity which all will deplore."[28]

In telegrams to V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, Swami Shraddhanand and M. M. Malaviya and in a letter to the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*—all dated 3 April—Gandhi stressed that "In opposing Rowlatt legislation we are fighting [the] spirit [of] terrorism."[30]

In his letter to the press, dated 26 February, Gandhi laid bare his fears and hopes. Gandhi feared that in the event of the Rowlatt bills becoming law "subterranean violence will be the remedy applied by impetuous hot-headed youths" and that "the Bills must intensify the hatred and ill-will against the State". He hoped that his followers "by their determination to undergo every form of suffering [would] make an irresistible appeal for justice to the Government towards which they bear no ill will and provide to the believers in the efficacy of violence...with an infallible remedy, and withal a remedy that blesses those that use it and also those against whom it is used."[31] Again and again, Gandhi emphasized that his satyagraha was intended to prevent the violent activities of "the ambitious and high-spirited youths."[32]

Though Gandhi sought the help of others, he would not allow them any share in the control of the movement. As in South Africa or afterwards, he saw to it that he retained sole control of the movement. It was he who approached other people, maintained links with the Viceroy, drew up instructions for the people, issued statements and satyagraha leaflets and decided every other matter including the fixing of dates for observing hartals and even for the withdrawal of the movement. He formed a Satyagraha Sabha, and Satyagraha Committees were set up in different provinces with few links among themselves. As H. F. Owen writes, "Gandhi assumed that each of them would defer to him on the broad strategy of the campaign and even on moredetailed tactics as far as possible....When Swami Shraddhanand of the Delhi Satyagraha Sabha suggested that in certain well-prepared areas the non-payment of land revenue should be included in the programme of civil disobedience, Gandhi overbore him with the words 'Bhai Sahab; you will acknowledge that I am an expert in satyagraha business'. Later, when the campaign resulted in violence, Gandhi sent detailed instructions to the committees without investigating local conditions, with the result that—as in the case of the Delhi Committee—the leading men threw in their hand and disbanded the local Sabha."[33]

In a letter of 1 April 1919 to C. F. Andrews, Gandhi wrote :

"In South Africa they [the Indians] surrendered to my judgement as to the selection of the laws and the time of breaking them. Here the Committee [set up to instruct which laws were to be violated] was thought of at my instance. But of every such Committee I am the President."[34]

Characteristically, Gandhi sought to lead a great all-India movement in a personal manner with all authority concentrated in himself. Gandhi did not even consult the Congress when he inaugurated Rowlatt Satyagraha by calling an all-India hartal on 30 March or when he changed the date to 6 April—both Sundays. But "two days after calling off Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi turned to Congress to approve his condemnation of acts of violence on the part of Indians and to broadcast a call to maintain law and order."[35]

The day of hartal, Gandhi instructed, was to be observed as "a day of fasting and prayer and penance and meetings all over." He was careful to point out that "the fast is not to be regarded, in any shape or form, in the nature of a hunger-strike, or *as designed to put any pressure upon the Government*" and that at public meetings "resolutions *praying* for the withdrawal of the two measures should be passed". According to his instruction, "Employees who are required to work even on Sundays may only suspend work after obtaining previous leave."[36] Later, on 12 April, not satisfied with the people's manner of responding to his call, he issued the following sheaf of "Instructions regarding *Satyagraha*," which "should be STRICTLY [capitals in the original] obeyed' :

"No processions.

No organized demonstrations.

No hartals on any account whatsoever without previous instructions of the Committee.

All police orders to be implicitly obeyed.

No violence.
No stone-throwing.
No obstruction of tram-cars or traffic.
No pressure to be exercised against anyone.

AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

No clapping of hands.
No demonstrations of approval or disapproval.
No cries of 'shame'.
No cheers.
Perfect stillness.
Perfect obedience to instructions of volunteers or management."[37]

The meticulous care with which Gandhi drafted the instructions many of which, according to him, were "inviolable principles of satyagraha,"[38] and the ingenuity with which he sought to kill the initiative of the people instead of unleashing it, to make them forget that they were fighting for a great cause and to reduce them to unthinking, unfeeling robots whose only job was to fulfil the tasks allotted to them, were uniquely Gandhian. Nothing perhaps could emasculate the people so well as such instructions.

For lack of co-ordination hartal was observed in some places like Delhi on 30 March. Despite precautions, it opened a Pandora's box. Though it had been intended as a harmless outlet for the pent-up resentment of the people against the raj, "to allow", as Gandhi said on another occasion, the "irritation" of the people "to find vent through meetings, etc.,"[39] it led to a violent upheaval in many places. Scant respect was shown to the mahatma's injunctions. The people were in no mood to fast and pray and do penance for the ruthless oppression and exploitation by the raj and its domestic allies. The call for a hartal served as a spark that kindled a fire that spread to many areas. As Judith Brown rightly observes, "In every place where hartal was well observed and Gandhi's propaganda welcomed it seems that the tinder of unrest had been drying for months and Gandhi's campaign was merely the spark that started the conflagration."[40] Bamford has noted that on 23, 29 and 30 March "crowds numbering as many as 40,000 persons" attended meetings at Amritsar. Though there were appeals both in the press and at public meetings "for peaceful resort to passive resistance," the idea did not commend itself to the people. "Few in Amritsar, and it is alleged no one in Lahore, took the Satyagraha vow."[41]

Hartal was observed throughout India. Meetings, militant demonstrations, strikes by the people were greeted with frequent firings by the raj in many places—Delhi, Calcutta and so on. But in Ahmedabad in Gujarat and in the five districts of the old Punjab—Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala (including Sheikhupura which was soon carved out of Gujranwala as a separate district), Lyallpur and Gujrat, there was a kind of uprising. All symbols of British authority—law courts, railway stations and other government buildings—became the targets of people's attacks. Attempts were made to disrupt transport and communications to prevent the movement of troops; telegraph wires were cut, trains were stoned, and railway stations were set fire to in many places. To cow the people into submission, Martial Law was declared and remained in force in the above districts of the Punjab from 15 April to 9 June. All kinds of appalling atrocities were perpetrated by the raj's men. There were floggings and shootings, and gallows too were erected at a public place; even aircraft was used to bomb villages and to fire on groups of peasants. Men, women and children were subjected to the humiliation of the worst sort. A reign of terror was the British imperialists' response to the spontaneous outbursts of the people's pent-up anger.

At Jallianwalla Bagh at Amritsar, defenceless people—379 according to the official estimate and nearly 1,000 according to the Congress Enquiry Committee's report—were butchered and many hundreds seriously wounded by General Dyer and his soldiers. The Congress Enquiry Committee, which inquired into what happened in the Punjab in the wake of the Rowlatt satyagraha, estimated that about 1,200 men were shot to death, at least 3,600 wounded and some permanently disabled.[42]

It should be noted that there had been manifestations of the anger of the people even before the call for a hartal; huge meetings and demonstrations had taken place.[43] In fact, unrest swept the old Punjab, especially after the return of the demobilized soldiers.

Referring to the raj's press-gang methods of recruiting soldiers and extortions of money for the war-fund, the Report of the Congress Enquiry Committee, of which the mahatma was the author, stated :

"We realize the necessity that existed during the War for a rigorous campaign of recruiting and collection of monetary contributions." Again, the Report said : "We consider it to be a proper thing to use social and moral pressure for stimulating contributions to the War, in which the very existence of the Empire may be at stake." Its only complaint was that "Sir M. O'Dwyer overstepped the limits of *decency* and in his *laudable zeal for outstripping his fellow satraps in supplying men and money* he forgot himself and did not consider the quality of the means adopted."[44] No doubt, the euphemistic language was worthy of the mahatma, the great votary of truth and non-violence.

There was a mass upsurge in Ahmedabad which began on 10 April. As the Government of India Despatch of 3 May 1920 on the Hunter Committee Report stated, "...although military assistance was called in from the afternoon of the 10th...it is important to notice that for two days mob law reigned in the city."[45] The law courts and other government buildings, as the Despatch said, were totally destroyed ; telegraph wires were cut and railway property destroyed or damaged ; and Europeans and government officers were targets of attack. Martial law was declared and, according to this official document, "the number of *ascertained* casualties" among the people was 28 killed and 123 wounded. It was the factory workers who took a leading part in this struggle.[46] The upsurge continued till 14 April when it "came to an end abruptly," as the Despatch noted, "and its cessation is ascribed partly to the return of Mr Gandhi who, be it said to his credit, used his influence with the people to assist the authorities in restoring order."[47]

In Viramgram in the Ahmedabad district and in Nadiad in the Kheda district, too, there were outbursts of popular anger—

especially in Viramgram where, according to the Despatch, the outbreak "was marked by the same ferocity" as in Ahmedabad.[48]

A remarkable feature of the mass upsurge was "complete fraternization between Hindus and Mohamedans," as the Congress Enquiry Committee stated.[49] It was the anti-imperialist struggle that brought the people, irrespective of caste and creed, together—something that endless sermons on Hindu-Muslim unity could not and did not achieve. In the old Punjab, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs fought shoulder to shoulder and shared the same suffering while, later, they were led, step by step, to kill and maim one another. In Ahmedabad and other places of struggle, wrote Gandhi, "The association of all classes of Mohamedans with the Hindus is significant, and the upheavals, wherever they have taken place, have, as is perfectly apparent, strong Mohamedan backing."[50] The official Report for the year 1919 stated :

> "One noticeable feature of the general excitement was the unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and Moslems.... Extraordinary scenes of fraternization occurred. Hindus publicly accepted water from the hands of Moslems and *vice versa*. Hindu-Muslim Unity was the watchword of processions indicated both by cries and by banners. Hindu leaders had actually been allowed to preach from the pulpit of a Mosque [not one mosque but several]."[51]

When Gandhi saw "the burning lava of popular fury that began ...to suddenly spout forth...from some mysterious subterranean vaults,"[52] he hurriedly retraced his steps, spoke of his "blunder of Himalayan dimensions" and worked hard together with the raj's men to put down the struggles of the people. He had been arrested on his way to Delhi, brought back to Bombay and released. Reaching Ahmedabad on 13 April, he, as he himself said, "placed myself unreservedly at the service of the authorities.... I deliberately refrained from narrating the acts done by the military under martial law."[53] Instead, with the Commissioner's permission he held a public meeting at his Sabarmati *ashram* and strongly condemned the people for their acts of violence. While announcing a *penitential* fast of three days for himself, he advised the people to fast for a day. Still more significantly, he asked those who had committed violent deeds to confess their "guilt."[54] The mahatma knew full well that those who would confess could hardly expect non-violent treatment from the raj : it was as good as handing over militant anti-imperialists to imperialism's hangmen. As we shall see, the mahatma would repeat such advice on every similar occasion.

Speaking in Bombay on 25 April, when the wounds of Ahmedabad had not yet healed, Gandhi said : "About 250 persons were wounded and more than 50 killed [in Ahmedabad]. For this, I do not blame the Government. We ourselves are to blame. I want you all to learn this lesson."[55]

In his letter of 14 April to J. L. Maffey, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Gandhi wrote :

"...in the place [Ahmedabad] I have made my abode I find utter lawlessness bordering almost on Bolshevism....I underrated the power of hatred and ill will....My satyagraha, therefore, will, at the present moment, be directed against my own countrymen.... I know you will accept my assurance when I tell you that ever since my being brought to Bombay and liberated there, I have done nothing but assist in securing order first in Bombay and secondly in Ahmedabad."[56]

In a letter to Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoolla, dated 15 April 1919, which Gandhi wanted Sir Ibrahim to submit to the Bombay Governor (or the Viceroy ?) "for perusal and consideration," Gandhi claimed :

"I do not know within the whole of my public experience a single occasion where my presence has had anything but a soothing effect on the elements of disturbance....Time may show that *neither India nor the world can have anything better than satyagraha as a restraining force and a force ranged on the side of law and order*."[57]

Interestingly, the Viceroy was writing next day to the Secretary of State :

"Interned he [Gandhi] would be a rallying cry to the disaffected, *out he may prove of great assistance to us*."[58]

One may remember that General Smuts too had held that Gandhi would prove to be "an enormous asset to Britain."[59]

These and similar observations by British imperialism's great sentinels reflected their shrewd understanding of the mahatma's role in Indian politics. Gandhi did prove a great asset to the raj—then and ever afterwards. On 18 April he issued a statement to the press suspending civil disobedience and again declared that he had "underrated the forces of evil." He went on to say: "I would be untrue to satyagraha, if I allowed it by any action of mine to be used as an occasion for feeding violence for embittering relations between the English and the Indians. Our satyagraha must therefore now consist in ceaselessly helping the authorities in all the ways available to us as satyagrahis to restore order and to curb lawlessness."[60] Ambalal Sarabhai and other friends of Gandhi put pressure on him to abandon civil disobedience *permanently* while his critics "blamed him for stopping satyagraha just when it had assumed enough momentum to be productive, and argued that nothing could be achieved without bloodshed."[61] But Gandhi held that "Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience, one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the state laws."[62] In other words, only loyalists could be good satyagrahis.

After Gandhi had suspended the Rowlatt satyagraha within a few days of initiating it, he wanted "to create a band of well-tried, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of satyagraha," and went to Bombay to raise such a corps through the Satyagraha Sabha. Unfortunately, he found it "a difficult task to interest the people in the peaceful side of satyagraha" and "the number of fresh recruits began gradually to dwindle instead of to grow."[63] So he was obliged to abandon this experiment with truth and non-violence.

On 30 May 1919, in an indignant letter to the Viceroy, Rabindranath, sharing "the universal agony of indignation" and wishing "to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings," gave "voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen" against the horrors perpetrated by the raj in the Punjab and renounced his knighthood. It is quite illuminating that on the same day—30 May 1919—Gandhi was writing to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy: "It is within His Excellency's knowledge that I have made no public declaration regarding the events in the Punjab....I *was not prepared to condemn martial law as such* ; *I was unwilling to do anything calculated needlessly to irritate local authority.*" He was sure that if a committee of inquiry was appointed by the government, "it would calm the public mind and *restore confidence...in the good intentions of the government.*"[64]

Earlier, on 10 May, Gandhi had sent a telegram "strongly" advising C. F. Andrews not to proceed to Lahore "without sanction."[65] Significantly, even earlier, on 20 April 1918, Gandhi had written to Sir Claude Hill : "You will admit that the leaders have *with remarkable self-restraint* [!] *hushed* all the tales of the forcible recruitment that is reported to have gone hitherto. I venture to think that the danger point has been reached."[66] This also shows on which side leaders like Gandhi were in those tumultuous days.

It is interesting that in a letter to Srinivasa Sastri, dated 6 June 1919, Gandhi criticized Rabindranath's "burning letter," which "the Punjab horrors have produced," as "*premature*" ![67] It may be of interest to know what Andrews wrote from Lahore to Rabindranath about the effect of the letter described by the mahatma as "premature". "Everyone knows how from that time forward, the reign of terror was broken, the insidious dread, which was hanging over them like a pestilence was lifted from them."[68]

It needs remembering that the AICC, meeting on 20 April, had demanded an inquiry into the Punjab wrongs and "*pressed Gandhi to proceed to the Punjab immediately in disregard of consequences.*" According to Tendulkar, Gandhi wired to the Viceroy for permission, which was refused.[69] Gandhi held discretion to be the better part of valour and refused to comply with the AICC directive.

In *Young India* of 11 June, Gandhi justified his "*complete silence*" over "*the Punjab disturbances,*" "though he "allowed myself to be misunderstood by many friends."[70] He felt proud of the fact that "I enjoy fairly intimate relations with him [the Private Secretary to the Viceroy] and we often write freely to each other."[71]

Indeed, nothing—not even "the Punjab horrors" (to quote his words)—could discourage the mahatma's faith in "the good intentions of the government" and his warm friendliness towards it. Interesting are the ways in which he wooed the raj. He enclosed with his letter of 5 May to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy a form containing the *swadeshi* vow and wished that the Viceroy might take the vow and send him a letter approving of the scheme for publication.[72] He also requested George Lloyd, then Governor of Bombay, whom John Gallagher has described as "that super-imperialist," to sign the *swadeshi* vow and give him "a letter for publication approving of the *swadeshi* movement" and to advise government officials "to encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving". He also respectfully asked the governor "to secure Lady George Lloyd's patronage for my spinning classes" and considered "it an honour to be allowed to present a spinning wheel to Her Excellency and to send her a lady teacher or to give her the lessons myself."[73]

Incidentally, Gandhi's campaign for *swadeshi*, then quite a recent one, had already achieved important successes. Lady Tata, Lady Petit and Mrs Jehangir Petit, wives of Bombay's textile magnates, started learning spinning and intended to "take away one spinning wheel each."[74]

In a letter of 14 June to the Secretary of State, Gandhi confessed that when he had asked people to observe hartal and go on fast, "I had not the vaguest notion of the deep-seated and widespread anger against the Government." He claimed : "*It is the advent of satyagraha which localized the disturbances and which has been such a powerful aid on the side of law and order.*" While he spoke of the "criminal *blunder*" of the Government in arresting him and Drs Satyapal and Kitchlew, Punjab leaders, and of the "awful acts of the mob", he was mute about the fiendish cruelties and indignities of which the people were victims. But he did not forget to congratulate Montagu "on your great and generous speech on the second reading of the Reforms Bill" and assured him that it would "be hailed with acclamation throughout India."[75]

Writing on 18 June to the Viceroy's Private Secretary, Gandhi said :

"The awful experiences of the past two months and a half have shown me that there is nothing save satyagraha of which civil disobedience is an integral part, that can possibly save India from Bolshevism and even a worse fate....*satyagraha alone can smooth the* *relations between Englishmen and Indians.*" He assured the Viceroy that *satyagraha* "is *designed among other things to remove the acerbity between the two members of the Empire*" and pointed out that "the madness was confined to certain small parts only of this great continent because *satyagraha had arrived and it was doing its silent but most efficient and effective work* during the critical period." "I will not deny", wrote Gandhi, "that the military preparations had, too, something to do with the preservation of peace in the other parts of India. But I venture to suggest that *satyagraha* had a greater deal to do with it."[76] The two, according to Gandhi, were complementary—not antithetical.

While perpetuating a regime of terror, the raj reciprocated the mahatma's feelings of warm friendship. Congratulating him on his "calming influence", the Viceroy's Private Secretary advised him :

"Don't do too much fasting ! You are not strong enough yet and I am sure *yours is an influence which we shall all want at full horse power.*"[77]

Again, on 7 May, Maffey informed Gandhi of the threat from Afghanistan, which, militarily, he said, was not a serious proposition, and asked for his help which "could be of immense significance in stabilizing Indian opinion." In reply, Gandhi sent him the following wire : "...We are sitting on many mines any one of which may explode any moment. The Afghan news adds to the existing complications. May God grant H. E. [the Viceroy] strength to bear these heavy burdens." On his part he undertook to defuse the mines which might harm the raj. In a letter of 11 May he assured Maffey of all help and said : "The Viceroy has the right to rely upon my doing no less."[78]

Those were the days when the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre had taken place and indiscriminate arrests, torture, shootings, bombings and firings from the air were going on in the Punjab, and the men, women and children of the five districts of that province were subjected to outrageous indignities.

Later, at about the middle of June, when there was considerable criticism of his manner of conducting the satyagraha, Gandhi proposed to launch civil disobedience. At its meeting in Bombay on 15 June, the executive committee of the Satyagraha Sabha decided on resumption of civil disobedience early in July and entrusted Gandhi with full powers to guide the movement.[79] Gandhi decided that he would start it after taking "every precaution against violence breaking out" and after banning "all demonstrations including hartal and that *it would "be confined only to myself*."[80]

But in a written statement issued by him on 1 July, Gandhi respectfully stated "that if the Government desire that I should suspend the resumption of civil disobedience for any definite time not too distant, I would consider it my duty to respect their wish..."[81]

Later, the Governor of Bombay observed that he had "felt convinced that he [Gandhi] really desired to postpone his campaign and possibly to give it up altogether..." According to the Governor, Gandhi was seeking from them "a peg on which he might hang" his decision to give up his satyagraha."[82]

Gandhi had an interview with the Governor and, receiving "a grave warning" from the Government of India through the Governor against undertaking his *individual* civil disobedience, he announced on 21 July his intention to accept the government's advice. In his usual style, marked by audacious casuistry, the mahatma declared:

"*A civil resister never seeks to embarrass Government.*"[83]

Thus the Rowlatt Satyagraha petered out without accomplishing its ostensible object—the repeal of the Rowlatt Act. But it also marked the mahatma's triumph. Satyagraha "as a restraining force and a force ranged on the side of law and order", "designed among other things to remove the acerbity between the two members of the Empire," "had arrived" and started "doing its silent but most efficient and effective work".

3. *From Co-operation to Non-Co-operation*

Gandhi welcomed the appointment of the Hunter Committee to inquire into the "disorders" and asked people to suspend "judgment over the personnel of the Commission", to "*trust it and respond to the Viceregal appeal for a calm atmosphere*". He did not forget to add: "If there has been a plot really to wage war against the King or to overthrow the Government, let those who are found guilty by a properly constituted court be hanged."[84] It was characteristic of the votary of non-violence to prescribe shooting and hanging for all those who dared to challenge the raj. On the other hand, in the days of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre and the martial law, he advised the oppressed that, in order "to regulate the relations between rulers and the ruled." they should apply "the standard that we apply to the regulation of domestic relations."[85] The mahatma preached that the oppressed should not expect reciprocity. For, "True friendship is put to the test only when one party disregards the obligations of friendship. *We stand to lose everything when we are angry against the Government.*"[86]

It was his "business", Gandhi explained in a wire to the District Magistrate of Ahmedabad on 11 May 1919, "[to] promote goodwill between rulers and [the] ruled."[87]

Though Gandhi had advised non-co-operation instead of boycott of British goods at the Khilafat Conference held in November 1919, his whole mind was bent on co-operating with the raj. In *Young India* of 31 December 1919, he hailed the Government of India Act as a "great measure" and wrote :

"The Reforms Act coupled with the Proclamation[88] is an earnest of the intention of the British people to do justice to India....Our duty, therefore, is not to subject them [the 'reforms'] to carping criticism, but to settle down quickly to work so as to make them a thorough success..."[89]

Speaking on 1 January 1920 at the Amritsar session of the Congress, Gandhi said :

"The King-Emperor has extended the hand of fellowship. I suggest to you that Mr Montagu has extended the hand of fellowship...Indian culture demands trust, and full trust..."[90] and other words which might strike one not initiated in Gandhian ethics as sickeningly deceptive.

To the raj, "the purpose of the constitutional changes", as Tomlinson says, "was purely defensive" ; for, " 'if the Government does not take charge of the operation, someone else will and there may easily grow up a disaffection that would soon become dangerous'."[91] Tomlinson rightly observes : "The progress of constitutional advance in India was determined by the need to attract Indian collaborators to the Raj, swell the revenues and maintain the political security of British rule, leaving the Government of India free to fulfil its imperial role."[92]

When the majority of those assembled at the Congress seemed unwilling to accept the "reforms", Gandhi held out the threat :

"I shall challenge that position, and I shall go across from one end of India to the other and say we shall fail in our culture, we shall fall from our position if we do not do our duty that culture demands, if we do not respond to the hand that has been extended to us." He concluded his speech with a fulsome eulogy of the Secretary of State for India.[93]

It is worth noting that only a little earlier the Secretary of State had "extended his hand of fellowship" by making the categorical declaration that the Rowlatt Act would not be withdrawn.[94]

Presiding at this session held in the city which bore traces of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, Pandit Motilal said : "It is the sentiments of affection and devotion with which His Majesty [the King-Emperor] and his predecessors have been animated that have consoled us in our misfortunes. It is for us, fellow delegates, on our own behalf and on behalf of the people of India whom we represent [sic], to convey our sincere homage to His Majesty and our humble appreciation of *His Royal benevolence*."

The main resolution moved at the Congress had criticized the "Reforms" Act as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing", but Gandhi moved an amendment seeking to delete the word "disappointing". The amendment was rejected but, at his instance, the Congress advised the people to work the "Reforms" pending establishment of "full Responsible Government", thanked Montagu "for his labours in connection with the Reforms" and offered its welcome to the Prince of Wales who was to visit India.[95]

As David Page put it, the attitude of the Gandhis and Motilals could be summed up in the words : "The Raj hath given and the Raj may give more : Blessed be the name of the Raj."[96]

Interestingly, Gandhi's resolution condemning the counter-violence of the people in the Punjab and Gujarat in answer to the violence unleashed by the raj had been thrown out by the Subjects

Committee of the Congress. It was Gandhi's threat to leave the Congress that forced it to adopt it.[97]

The report of the Punjab Inquiry Committee set up by the Congress, which was drafted by Gandhi and published on 25 March 1920, denounced the people in the strongest possible terms for their retaliatory acts of violence and recommended, as he always did, "*condign punishment for the culprits.*" The concluding portion of the report is significant :

"We recognize, too, that when the country is on the eve of important changes introduced in the administration, and the Sovereign has made an appeal to the officials and people for co-operation we should say nothing that may be calculated to retard the progress."[98]

Why Non-Co-operation ?

The question is : What made Gandhi, who was eager at least till March 1920 to respond to the appeal of the Sovereign and to co-operate with the raj, swerve abruptly from the path of co-operation to the path of non-co-operation ?

In a letter to the *Times of India* of 3 April 1920, Gandhi wrote :

"The country requires some definite action. And nothing can be better for the country than non-co-operatiou as some definite action. *The forces of violence cannot be checked otherwise.*"[99]

Yet, even in May 1920, Gandhi was not thinking of boycott of Legislative Councils under the new Act but advising voters how to cast their votes.[100]

It seems that the march of events did not allow Gandhi and his associates to settle down quietly in order to work out the imperialist plan as they had intended.

In May 1920 the Treaty of Sevres, depriving Turkey of the Arab lands (where the holiest shrines of the Muslims are situated) as well as of Thrace, Smyrna and Armenia, was made public. The petitions of the Khilafatists and of Gandhi to the Viceroy and the representations of a Khilafatist delegation to London proved futile. The treaty not only curbed the temporal powers of the Sultan of Turkey, who had been a war-time ally of Germany, but deprived him of his spiritual powers. Though he had so long been regarded as the Caliph (or the Pope) of the Muslim world, he lost control over places regarded by the Muslims as most holy.

Soon after the war had started, leading Pan-Islamists like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mohammad Ali and his brother, Shaukat Ali, were interned. Even before the end of the war their release became an issue. The end of the war, as Bamford writes, "saw a steadily increasing Pan-Islamic agitation in India regarding the ultimate fate of the Khilafate."[101] In the early months of 1920 violent speeches were made in different Khilafat conferences and there were talks of *jehad* or holy war against the British. During 1920, "the Khilafat movement became a steadily increasing danger to the peace of the country."[102] Leading Muslims talked even of "welcoming Bolshevism",[103] though they must have had very little idea of what Bolshevism was. Swayed by their religious passions, many Muslims, especially from Sind and the North-West Frontier Province, sold all their possessions and trekked towards Afghanistan, the nearest Muslim country, but most of them were turned back by its government. Some of the *muhajirs* wanted to go to Asia Minor to fight the British and crossed into Soviet Asia. In the immediate post-war years the Khilafat issue, as Palme Dutt rightly says, became "the rallying point of Muslim mass unrest."[104]

Bamford remarks : "For some time prior to this [the meeting at Allahabad on the Khilafat question on 1 and 2 June 1920] it had been apparent that Gandhi had realized that his advocacy of co-operation at Amritsar had weakened his hold on his followers and had severely tested the loyalty of his Muhammadan allies...."[105]

But the main reason for Gandhi's abrupt, complete change of front seems to be that he was afraid that mass unrest, especially Muslim unrest on the Khilafat issue, might have violent flare-ups in places. It was suggested in a confidential Government Note of May 1921 that Gandhi opted for non-co-operation in order to save India from Bolshevism.[106] Interestingly, in reply to questions put to him at a meeting in Bombay on 18 June 1921, Gandhi claimed that "his movement was a great bulwark against Bolshevism."[107] The mahatma, who was "ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is", as he confessed soon after,[108] felt alarmed at the prospect of an upsurge of mass unrest, especially of Muslim unrest, and the challenge it might throw to the established order. Interestingly, after the Russian Revolution, the official writings, including intelligence reports, as well as the writings of Congress leaders like Gandhi show that the spectre of Bolshevism was haunting them, though no Communist Party existed then in India. They seemed to see the Bolshevik spectre behind every popular upheaval.

"As one who has enjoyed a certain measure of your Excellency's confidence and *as one who claims to be a devoted well-wisher of the British Empire,*" Gandhi felt it necessary to explain to the Viceroy and, through the Viceroy, "to His Majesty's Ministers", his connection with the Khilafat question. In his letter of 22 June to the Viceroy, Gandhi wrote : "My duty *to the Empire to which I owe my loyalty* requires me to resist the cruel violence that has been done to the Mussalman sentiment....I admit that non-co-operation practised by the mass of people is attended writh grave risks.... *Not to run some risks now will be to court much greater risks, if not virtual destruction of law and order.*" But as "an escape from non-co-operation", as the ideal solution of the problem, the mahatma suggested that the Viceroy himself should "lead the agitation" to remove the Muslims' grievances.[109]

As Gandhi repeatedly pointed out, non-co-operation that he proposed was intended to forestall violent struggles against the raj. He felt that one had to choose between non-co-operation and "disorganized subterranean upheaval whose effect no one can foresee and whose spread it would be impossible to check or regulate."[110] His main purpose was "to check or regulate" what he feared, to divert the anger and hatred of the Indian masses against British imperialism along the harmless channel of non-violent non-co-operation or satyagraha so that the then existing political and social order was not menaced.

"I am convinced," said Gandhi, "that, had there been no move for non-co-operation, violence would long since have broken out. *It is non-co-operation which has prevented violence.* The Muslims are boiling over, but they have kept their patience in the belief that the Hindus are with them."[111]

Gandhi's devoted disciple and biographer wrote : "Gandhi felt that the storm was brewing, and he did all in his power to break its violence."[112] Tendulkar also stated : "He had to hold back the violence that lay smouldering. *He considered mobocracy as the greatest danger that menaced India.*"[113] It was "mobocracy"—not British imperialism to which he swore his loyalty—which always, including the days of the upheaval after World War II, appeared to Gandhi as the worst menace to India and which, it was his life-long mission to combat and suppress.

It should be noted that Gandhi's non-co-operation, seemingly anti-imperialist, was meant to help the raj to tide over a difficult crisis. As he himself said, non-co-operation and non-co-operation "*alone* can pave the way for a genuine understanding between Englishmen and Indians..."[114] In his rejoinder to Rabindranath's "The Call of Truth", Gandhi wrote that "*there is no choice for India save between violence and non-co-operation.*" He said that "non-co-operation is intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation based on mutual respect and trust."[115]

While moving a resolution at a meeting in Bombay in April 1920, asking every Indian to withdraw co-operation from the government, if the Khilafat question was not properly solved, Gandhi declared :

"When they in India asked for self-government it did not mean that they did not want British rule. *There was no Hindu or Mohammedan who was against the British flag waving over India.*"[116]

Truly, Indians like Gandhi were happy to see the British flag flying over India. He was quite categorical : "...the movement [proposed non-co-operation] is not anti-English. *It is not even anti-Government.*"[117]

Gandhi pointed out that he hoped by his " '*alliance*' with the Mohammedans to achieve a threefold end—to obtain justice in the face of odds with the method of satyagraha and to show its efficiency over all other methods, to secure Mohammedan friendship for the Hindus and thereby *internal peace* also and last but not least *to transform ill will into affection for the British and their constitution*..."[118] One may doubt how far Gandhi was sincere about the first object but there can be little doubt about the other two.

In his letter of 12 June 1920 to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Gandhi stated : "...I feel that I at least must devote for the time being my exclusive attention to the Khilafat question. I flatter myself with the belief that *mine is the greatest contribution to the preservation of the public peace* [*i.e., of the status quo*] *in India*."[119]

Paradoxically, Gandhi served the interests of the raj by offering co-operation and rendering obedience as well as by non-co-operating with it or civilly disobeying it. "Satyagraha", he said, "consists at times in civil disobedience, other times in civil obedience."[120]

As unrest spread in the country, Gandhi's task was to teach the people virtues of perfect obedience to government orders. He said : "...civil disobedience and non-co-operation do not go together. Any ordinances, therefore, which the Government might promulgate or any orders it might pass must be fully obeyed."[121]

Gandhi seemed to be in a hurry. Without waiting for the Congress to meet at a special session early in September to decide whether to change the policy of co-operation which, at Gandhi's strong insistence, the Amritsar Congress had adopted, he inaugurated non-co-operation on 1 August under the auspices of the Central Khilafat Committee. On his proposal a committee including himself was formed and was "invested with full powers ... to work out the scheme, whose decisions would be binding on all people." He claimed dictatorial powers so long as the Muslims acknowledged him as their leader. He strongly disapproved of the boycott of British goods and "urged upon the people to avoid violence in any shape or form."[122]

Gandhi's main object behind this sudden change of front was to divert the agitation of a section of the Muslims who were sore over the Khilafat issue into non-violent channels as well as to contain the struggles of the peasantry, the working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie which, he was afraid, might take a revolutionary turn.

Non-Co-operation Begins :

The Central Khilafat Committee, Bombay, with Gandhi as the first signatory, issued a statement asking people to observe hartal on 1 August 1920, *devote the day to prayer and fasting*, and hold meetings. They asked the mill workers *not* to abstain from work without the permission of their employers. A special note stated: "There should be no processions. Speeches should be restrained. .. All police and other Government instructions or regulations should be *strictly and scrupulously* obeyed. No meetings should be held when there is any written prohibition."[123] All title-holders, honorary magistrates, etc., sympathetic to the Khilafat cause, were expected to surrender their titles and honorary posts on that day.

"The very first requirement of non-co-operation", wrote Gandhi, "is to preserve peace....If violence does break out, *we ourselves would, and we ought to, rush immediately to the help of the Government to stop it.*"[124]

Interestingly, Gandhi advised his listeners at Hyderabad in Sind not to use violence, not to resist but to "follow non-co-operation" and, "if too weak to follow non-co-operation", to "*do hijrat*,"[125] that is, to migrate from India to some Muslim country. Quite naturally, Gandhi wanted to be rid of the Muslims violently inclined towards the raj.

At the special session of the Congress, held in Calcutta early in September 1920, Gandhi's resolution on progressive non-violent non-co-operation faced strong opposition but was ultimately adopted. About half the delegates did not vote. According to Gandhi's original resolution, the "redress" of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs—not the attainment of *swaraj*—was the object of the movement. Bengal leaders like C. R. Das, supported by Vijayraghavachari and Motilal Nehru, opposed Gandhi's programme. They insisted that *swaraj* should be the primary goal of the movement. C. R. Das favoured council-entry as a means of paralysing the government. He wanted boycott of British goods and withdrawal of Indian money and labour from British enterprises in preference to Gandhi's items like renunciation of titles.[126] Gandhi had to incorporate the demand for *swaraj* and the boycott of foreign goods in his resolution, though he was hardly reconciled to them. *To him, the "redress" of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs was "greater' than the political demand for swaraj.*[127]

The non-co-operation programme included surrender of titles and honorary offices conferred by the raj, resignation from *nominated* seats in local bodies and refusal to attend official and semi-official functions—all these items concerned the members of the upper classes who were particularly noted for their loyalty to the raj—and gradual boycott of government-controlled or -aided schools and colleges, law courts, and legislatures and boycott of foreign goods. Besides, "the military, clerical and labouring classes" were advised to refuse "to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia."

Interestingly, *elected* members of local bodies like municipalities, district and local boards were permitted to co-operate with the raj.

It is worth noting that the basic masses—the peasants and workers—had hardly any role to play in the proposed movement except by boycotting foreign goods. Participation in the programme was confined only to a tiny minority—members of the middle and upper middle classes.

Speaking in support of his resolution on non-co-operation, Gandhi "claimed that his was a *religious movement*" and "described the state of excitement in the Mussulman community such that *for very safety and peace*, no less for brotherhood and unity, they should go with them non-co-operating with Government."[128]

Though the non-co-operation programme included boycott of foreign goods, Gandhi went on denouncing it. He wanted boycott *only* of foreign cloth. He argued that "boycott of British goods has been conceived as a punishment and can have no place in non-co-operation which is conceived in a spirit of self-sacrifice and is a matter of sacred duty." He also criticized it on the ground that "boycott of British goods is thoroughly unpractical, for, it involves sacrifice of their millions by millionaires. It is in my opinion infinitely more difficult for a merchant to sacrifice his millions than for a lawyer to suspend his practice."[129]

It appears that Gandhi was more interested in the profits of the comprador merchant princes who sold British goods on the domestic market (and in the prosperity of the cotton mill owners) than in the building of indigenous industries. It may be recalled that the *Swadeshi* movement with its slogan of boycott of British goods during the anti-partition agitation in Bengal gave an impetus to the growth of many *swadeshi* enterprises in this province.

No doubt, the slogan of boycott of foreign cloth, which Gandhi raised, agreed with the interests of comprador merchants dealing in Lancashire piece-goods as well as with those of the Indian cotton mill owners. The rate of exchange of the rupee, which rose to 2s. 10½d. in February 1920, gradually declined to 1s. 5d. in December 1920 and fell below 1s 3d. in March 1931. The trade in Lancashire cotton goods had been booming before the slump occurred. Large orders had been placed by Indian compradors on European import houses and the contracts were in sterling. When negotiations for settling the contracts at about 2s. to the rupee failed, the Indian merchants, faced with the prospect of huge losses, refused to fulfil their contracts.[180] Not surprisingly, Marwari merchants dealing in Lancashire textiles were enthusiastic supporters of non-co-operation and were a tower of strength to the mahatma both at the Calcutta and at the Nagpur Congress.[181]

The beneficiaries of the boycott of foreign cloth in 1920-1 were, no doubt, big comprador merchants and native cotton mill owners. But the boycott of other British goods like cotton mill machinery would harm their interests. Imports of cotton mill machinery rose almost six times in value between 1919-20 and 1921-2.[182] The prosperity of the Bombay and Ahmedabad millowners, Gandhi's friends and benefactors, greatly depended on imports of foreign mill machinery, especially British. Interestingly, speaking on the '*Swadeshi* vow' during the Rowlatt satyagraha, Gandhi said, "...requirements of the foregoing pledge are met, if we all only use cloth woven by means of imported machinery from yarn spun from Indian cotton by means of similar machinery."[183]

While inveighing against the boycott of British goods (other than cloth) Gandhi condemned *ad nauseam* in 1920-1 the wearing of foreign cloth as a "sin" and foreign cloth as our greatest outward pollution."[184] The exploitation of spiritual sentiments was extremely useful in this colonial and semi-feudal country for creating a saintly halo around the mahatma which no appeal to reason could do.

Professed Aims of the Movement

(i) *'Redress of the Khilafat and Punjab Wrongs'*

Gandhi was not interested in the merits of the Khilafat question. His objection was not to the British and their allies making the Arab lands their mandated territories or to their planting their stooges as rulers but to the very right of the Arabs to self-determination. He said : "Arabia...is a Mussalman trust, not purely Arabian....The Khalifa must be the custodian of the holy places and therefore also the routes to them." In his characteristic way he claimed that Mussalmans and Hindus "do not believe that the Arabs or the Armenians want complete independence of Turkey". [135]

The issue arouud which Gandhi and the Muslim leaders like the Ali brothers, Dr M. A. Ansari and Abul Kalam Azad sought to mobilize the Muslims was a reactionary one. It pandered to backward religious consciousness of the Muslims. Jinnah rightly "deplored the Khilafat agitation, which had brought the reactionary mullah element to the surface." [136] It defended the anachronism called the Ottoman Empire, a bulwark of reaction, at the expense of the right of self determination of the Arab peoples.

Gandhi planted himself at the head of the Khilafat movement in order to curb the militancy of the Muslims. The Muslim leaders had no faith in non-violence, but they accepted it as a policy, for they wanted Hindu support and expected Gandhi to rally it behind their demand. The Khilafatists themselves were divided into two sections—timid and militant. The Bombay merchants and millowners like Umar Sobhani were mainly compradors who sold Lancashire piece-goods and were tied to British capital in other ways. They believed in petitions and protest meetings, and Gandhian methods suited their spiritual as well as temporal interests perfectly. The militant section, led by the Ali brothers, who came to dominate the Khilafat movement, did not think it prudent to displease Gandhi, who was expected to rally Hindus behind their demand for the restoration of the Sultan of Turkey's temporal and spiritual powers. The mahatma, on the other hand, took upon himself the task of nursing them and keeping them on the right rails, that is, nonviolent rails.

What did Gandhi mean by "the redress of the Punjab wrongs" ? At the All-India Khilafat Conference in November 1919 Gandhi vetoed a proposal to link the Punjab wrongs to the Khilafat question.[137] When the government introduced the Indemnity Bill to protect its officers from being sued for their crimes during the Martial Law days in the Punjab, the mahatma defended the measure.[138] But popular resentment began to grow with the publication in May 1920 of the Report of the Hunter Committee, which was looked upon as an attempt to whitewash the crimes of Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer and other officers. So Gandhi felt it wise to include "the redress of the Punjab wrongs" as one of the objects of the non-co-operation movement.

What kind of 'redress' did Gandhi seek ? What he wanted was the stoppage of pensions to O'Dwyer and Dyer and the dismissal from service of four other officers—two British and two Indian. This would, in the mahatma's opinion, be adequate "redress of the Punjab wrongs" To quote him, "I have not asked for reprisals against the author of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. I have asked for nothing more than the stopping of the pensions of the culprits and the dismissal of those who are yet holding office."[139]. He opposed the demand for the impeachment or prosecution of O' Dwyer, Dyer and other officers,[140] a demand which had been raised by the AICC, while meeting in May 1920.[141]

The demand for "the redress of the Punjab wrongs," which was raised by Gandhi in view of the people's keen resentment and the meaning of which was not spelt out clearly before them, made a mockery of the widespread anti-imperialist feelings roused by the Punjab horrors.

(ii) *Swaraj*

Though, at the Calcutta Special Congress, the attainment of *Swaraj* became one of the professed aims of the non-co-operation movement, Gandhi considered it less important than the 'redress' of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. Pleading for the release of the Savarkar brothers in May 1920 Gandhi *approvingly* wrote that "they do not desire independence from the British connection," that, "on the contrary they feel that India's destiny can be best worked out in association with the British."[143]

At the Nagpur session the attainment of *swaraj* by all legitimate and peaceful means became the creed of the Congress. As Gandhi pointed out, it was left deliberately vague in order to attract those who advocated British connection as well as those who sought to destroy it.[144] Jinnah, whose goal was the same as Gandhi's, was more forthright. He told the Congress that *India would never get her independence without bloodshed* and decided to leave it [145]

Rules of the 'Game'

Gandhi, who declared his "faithfulness to Gokhale, *especially when I seemed to be living in a camp which the Indian world calls opposite,*" and asserted that his "upbringing drew him to the old leaders "[146] regretted that the leaders of the 'liberal' hue had dropped out of the Congress. He also regretted that Montagu *wrongly* "thinks me mistaken in my present activity" "*Mr Montagu,*" he wrote, "*admits that, through my activities till now, I have rendered nothing but service to the Empire....*I am sure that *what I am doing at present is my greatest service.*"[147]

The Congress programme of renunciation of titles awarded by the raj, refusal to attend official functions when invited, resignation from honorary posts under the government, boycott of law-courts by pleaders and litigants, and gradual boycott of government or government-aided educational institutions was hardly expected to injure the raj's interests. The boycott of foreign cloth was a much more serious proposition. But at the moment Lancashire's market in India was in the doldrums because of the abnormal rise in exchange rates. Gandhi's programme did not permit any active role in the movement for the masses and carefully eliminated all risks of confrontation with the raj. The non-payment of rent and taxes by the peasantry and strikes in industrial establishments would have been a real challenge to the alien rulers, but Gandhi was opposed to them. Writing in *Young India* of 9 February 1921, he said that *it was "dangerous to make political use of factory labourers or the peasantry."*[148] He held that it would be "a most serious mistake to make use of labour strikes for such a purpose [a political one]." "In India", he said, "we want no political strikes."[150] It was part of his strategy to keep the workers and peasants out of the arena of struggle. He advised them to concentrate on hand-spinning and hand-weaving in order to spin and weave their way to *swaraj* within one year.

Interestingly, at the Calcutta Special Congress the mahatma assured the people that the movement would win for India "full independence...within a year." The promise which, as Bamford writes, "Gandhi obviously knew that he could not fulfil,"[151] was repeated several times. Criticizing it, Rabindranath wrote :

"There dangles before the country the bait of getting a thing of inestimable value, dirt cheap and in double-quick time. It is like the faqir with his goldmaking trick."[152]

The faqir shifted the date from time to time and when his trick did not come off, as he knew it would not, he blamed the people for not carrying out his stipulations.

Gandhi took every measure to keep the movement within safe bounds and avoid any confrontation with the raj. *He was "most anxious that this fight is fought in a sportsmanlike spirit."* "It cuts my human flesh to the quick," he said, "to find human beings not playing *the game*."[153]

During the first three months of 1921, Gandhi "laid emphasis on the boycott of law courts and of schools and colleges."[154] Then between April and June 1921 a campaign was launched to raise Rs 1 crore for the Tilak Swaraj Fund (to which big compradors contributed liberally), recruit one crore Congress members and persuade people to introduce 90 lakh *charkhas* (spinning-wheels) in their homes. The next three months were taken up in the campaign for the use of *swadeshi* by which Gandhi meant only indigenous cloth. Throughout the period Gandhi was tireless in preaching non-violence. In November 1920 he said : "Rivers of blood shed by the Government cannot frighten me, but I would be deeply pained even if the people so much as abuse the Government for my sake or in my name."[155]

In that explosive situation the mahatma's sermons to the people were quite useful to the *raj*. As D. A. Low writes, "The Government seems to have realized fairly early on that there was a great deal of sincerity in Gandhi's preaching of non-violence. It was certainly in no sense in their interest to stifle it [the non-co-operation movement]."[156] In April 1920 the Government of India "firmly decided that 'a policy of abstaining as far as possible from interference, in order to avoid making martyrs of fanatical leaders or precipitating disorders' would yield the best results."[157] To quote Low again, "This policy of non-interference with the non-co-operation movement was publicly set forth in the Viceroy's speech to the Imperial Legislative Council in September 1920, and two months later it was officially promulgated in a Government 'Resolution'."[158] The resolution stated that the Government had refrained from taking any action against those who had "advocated simultaneously with non-co-operation abstention from violence" and that it had "instructed local Governments to take action against those persons only who...have gone beyond the limits originally set by its organizers..."[159]

Immediately the mahatma hailed this resolution as *the "first triumph of a striking order"* achieved by the non-co-operators and "congratulated" both the government and the people "upon this wise decision."[160] Welcoming this resolution in another article, Gandhi assured his followers : "*By taking care that the Government have nothing to fear from us, we ourselves have acquired courage.*"[161] In other words, the non-co-operation movement as planned by the mahatma presented no threat to the raj, and the raj, in its turn, meant no harm to him and his followers.

Gandhi's entire energy was directed towards restraining people from doing anything that might displease the authorities. To cite an instance, he chided the people of Karachi for observing a complete hartal on the occasion of the Bombay governor's visit—at a time when Sind witnessed "greater persecution, more tyranny or frightfulness" than at any time before.[162]

While trying his best not to "irritate" the raj Gandhi expected it to reciprocate and abstain from taking any harsh measures. "It was *common cause*," he said, that so long as the movement remained non-violent, nothing would be done to interfere with it."[163] Both the raj and Gandhi had a "*common cause*"—to safeguard law and order and defuse an explosive situation.

The policy of non-interference with non-violent non-co-operation was adopted also by the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, who came in April 1921. Gandhi, the supreme leader, welcomed Reading and instructed non-co-operators that *they "must do nothing to add to his difficulties. We must give His Excellency the fullest credit for meaning to do well*."[164] In mid-May he had a series of six private interviews with the Viceroy. As Gandhi wrote in *Young India* of 25 May, he sought an appointment with Reading, "for *I wanted to make clear the limits and the meaning of non-co-operation*." And he added : "The veil must remain drawn over the details of the conversation between the Viceroy and myself."[165] It took Gandhi six private interviews to explain to the Viceroy "the limits and the meaning of non-co-operation," which his pile of writings had failed to do.

One of the details of the conversation, over which the veil was lifted, became the subject of much controversy. The Viceroy pointed out to Gandhi some passages from the speeches of the Ali brothers which, in the Viceroy's opinion, "were calculated to incite to violence", and added that the government proposed to prosecute them. Gandhi promised to persuade the Ali brothers "to express publicly their regret." He himself made a draft of the apology, showed it to the Viceroy and *re-drafted it according to the Viceroy's instructions*. He had it signed by the Ali brothers and published.[166] "This 'apology'," writes Sitaramayya, "was an epoch-making event in the history of the movement. Anglo-India was jubilant over Government's victory. Lord Reading was satisfied with the 'apology' and gave up the idea of prosecution."[167] Referring to the apology, Motilal wrote to Gandhi : "Indeed it seems to me that the whole principle of non-co-operation has been given away."[168]

At this time Gandhi did not fail to repeat what he had said before : "the movement of non-co-operation is neither anti-British nor anti-Christian."[168a] He also wrote : "We are not even trying to change the British, we are trying to reform ourselves."[168b]

Gross Violations of the Rules

Despite Gandhi's best efforts, the "game" which he wanted to be played in a "sportsmanlike spirit" was marred, as it progressed, by what he might describe as foul play by both sides. Everywhere the people mistook the mahatma for a symbol of anti-imperialism and started violating his injunctions in actual practice. Already in the last six months of 1920, there had been 106 strikes affecting 170,000 workers and other employees in Bengal,[169] which seem to have been unconnected with the non-co-operation movement. In the following year the strike wave mounted higher in Bengal—39 strikes in jute mills with 186,479 workers participating in them,[170] frequent strikes in big engineering and other industrial concerns, and strikes in coal mines and in tea-gardens in Darjeeling and the Dooars.[171] According to Vera Anstey, "The Bengal Committee on Industrial Unrest of 1921 analyzed the facts and features of 137 strikes. It reported that in many cases the immediate causes were non-economic."[172] Congress leaders like C. R. Das took an active part in some of these strikes.

In May 1921 several thousand workers, sick of oppression and exploitation and dreaming of the advent of Gandhi's *Ramarajya*, abandoned their work in European tea-plantations in the Surma Valley to return to their native places in Bihar and eastern U. P. By this time propaganda and rumour had made Gandhi appear in their imagination, as in the imagination of countless other people like them, as an *avatar* who had come to deliver them. But, on learning of the desertion, Gandhi promptly expressed his solidarity with European tea-planters, notorious for their bestial treatment of their Indian workers. "I should be sorry," wrote Gandhi, "if anybody used my name to lead the men to desert their employers. ...I observe that the *Times of India* has made the most illegitimate use of the trouble to impute enmity to English commercial interests in India."[173]

The workers arrived with their families at Chandpur, a railway and steamer junction in the Comilla district, in the hope that arrangements would be made to take them to their village homes. Instead, the government let loose Gurkha troops who charged with bayonets defenceless men, women and children. Anger and indignation swept through East Bengal, which, as C. F. Andrews wrote, was "on the very border line of violence." Not only were hartals observed and educational institutions closed in numerous places in East Bengal but shopkeepers refused to sell food to government employees in Comilla, Chandpur, Noakhali and Chittagong, and domestic servants refused to serve Europeans The employees of the steamer company and the Assam Bengal Railways struck work for an indefinite period to express their solidarity with the plantation workers. "The most disquieting feature", wrote the Bengal governor, Lord Ronaldshay, to Montagu, "is the extent of the hold which events have shown they have already acquired over large classes of people. They have been able to call strikes on the inland steamer lines and the Assam Bengal Railway, and they have been able to call hartals in a number of East Bengal towns simultaneously."[174] To quote Rajat Kanta Ray, "What East Bengal witnessed in this hour of crisis was a spontaneous rising of the entire population, especially the lower classes who expressed through the strikes their acute sense of economic exploitation and racial abasement under white rule."[175] At Chandpur and other places, volunteers distributed relief among the plantation workers and other strikers during the prolonged strikes. The Chandpur events, as Andrews observed, roused "a deep feeling of charity" and made Bengal one, consciously and visibly.

In Bengal, non-violent non-co-operation, so dear to Gandhi's heart, attained its highest form. Hindu-Muslim unity, on which he was eloquent throughout his life, was also fully achieved. Yet the mahatma was not happy. Marwari jute and other merchants also were far from pleased. Gandhi condemned the prolonged steamer and railway strikes, which were hurting not only the interests of British capital—of the jute barons and merchants—but also those of their Marwari compradors. In *Young India* of 15 June 1921—curiously the same day on which the Bengal governor was deploring the strikes (great men proverbially think alike)—Gandhi lashed out :

"Whoever instigated it" ["the sympathetic strike of the steamship employees"—the strike of the Bengali Muslim and Hindu workers out of sympathy for the super-exploited workers from Bihar and the U. P.] did an ill service to the labourers. *In India we want no political strikes....We must gain control over all the unruly and disturbing elements or isolate them*...We seek not to destroy capital or capitalists, but to regulate the relations between capital and labour."[176]

Interestingly, all the companies the employees of which had gone on strike were controlled by British capital. On another occasion he wrote:

"The avowed policy of non-co-operation has been not to make political use of disputes between labour and capital... In Jharia, for instance, it was a non-co-operator who prevented an extending strike. The moderating influence in Calcutta was that of non-co-operators"[177]

Referring to the coal-fields of Jharia again, Gandhi said: "To start active civil disobedience in this place will certainly mean arousing the working class....I have, therefore, given my emphatic advice against starting active civil disobedience in this place at present. To introduce civil disobedience among workers would be inviting trouble." Instead, he advised "rich gentlemen" of the place to promote khadi—both spinning and weaving by workers—, encourage workers to "give up drinking" and to "make them aware of their duties and then of their rights."[178]

Despite the brakes the mahatma applied, the struggles of the people surged forward breaking all the rules of the "game." In April 1921 started a movement for non-payment of rent. Sharecroppers cultivating lands of the Midnapur Zamindari Company—a European Company owning zamindari in several districts of Bengal—refused to pay rent to the company, first in Rajshahi and then in Nadia, Murshidabad and Midnapur. Two indigo factories of the company had to be closed down. Later, the no-rent movement spread to Rangpur and other districts and to the zamindaris of native landlords like the maharaja of Kasimbazar.

One should distinguish between two types of mass struggles during this period. There were mass struggles against the raj, which local Congress leaders initiated and led but which the top leadership of the Congress, especially Gandhi, were very much opposed to. Such a struggle of the peasantry was launched by Birendranath Sasmal against the imposition of union board rates in the district of Midnapur. According to Rajat Kanta Roy, "By November 1921 entire villages had combined in such a manner that under social pressure union board members and chaukidars in many unions had resigned, union board rates had been withheld in all sub-divisions of Midnapur and attempts at distraint of property in order to realize union board rates had been foiled by the fact that no purchaser was forthcoming in the seriously affected areas of Tamluk and Contai."[179] (One should note that, despite the mahatma's charisma, buyers of the satyagrahi peasants' auctioned lands were not scarce in a much smaller area like Kheda in 1918 during the satyagraha led by him personally). When all repressive measures of the government, including employment of armed forces, failed in the face of the total solidarity of the people, the government was forced to abolish all union boards in the district and to return confiscated goods. This victory achieved by the peasantry, unaided by the commercial and political elite of India and without the advantage or disadvantage of simultaneous negotiations with or appeals to Viceroys and governors, was no fake one like the more celebrated ones in Champaran and Kheda, about which myths abound.

The struggle, no doubt, violated Gandhi's injunctions. Gandhi's secretary, Krishnadas, held that, "They little realized that this action on their part was opposed to Mahatmaji's strategy..."[180] When a Bengal delegate to the Ahmedabad Congress session asked Gandhi on 29 December 1921 if payment of *chaukidari* tax could be stopped, Gandhi forbade this : "Not yet. That would be offensive civil disobedience."[181]

Another successful movement in a wide area in Birbhum, led by the local Congress leader Jitendralal Banerjee and opposing settlement operations, was marked by similar solidarity of the people. Officials were boycotted, which the mahatma never wanted ; even porters could not be procured.[182]

There was another type of mass struggle in which even local Congress leaders played no role or which were conducted in violation of the directives of Congress committees. At this time rural unrest spread to almost every district. The refusal to pay union board rates developed into refusal to pay chaukidari taxes and even rent, contrary to the instructions of Congress committees. As the report of the sub-divisional officer of Ghatal stated, "the masses absolutely refuse to listen to Congress committees."[183] Adivasi peasants and workers played an important role in the struggle in the western part of Midnapur and contiguous areas of Bankura and Singhbhum (in Bihar).[184] A "great wave of lawlessness...swept over the affected areas of east and west Bengal" and, as Sumit Sarkar writes, "Despite a formal statement by the publicity board of the Provincial Congress warning the districts against no-rent, reports of such movements were flooding in by the winter of 1921-2 amidst a general collapse of authority in a number of regions."[185] In his report to the Secretary of State, the Bengal governor Ronaldshay wrote on 9 February 1922 that "it is being widely stated in the villages that Gandhi raj has come and that there is no longer any necessity to pay anything to anybody. They are consequently not only refusing to pay rent and taxes but also repudiating their debts !"[186] The districts of Midnapur, Rangpur, Chittagong and Tippera were the most affected areas where by January-March 1922 civil administration was on the verge of collapse.[187] In Chittagong, revolt spread to remote forest areas, the police and forest officers became the targets of attack, and by May 1922 the forest department practically stopped functioning.[188]

Naturally, warned by a friend "of threatening clouds that appear time and again on the horizon in Bengal" and full of alarm, the mahatma appeared in his usual role of a great friend of the raj and appealed "to all the Bengal leaders to rest on their oars and not to take a single new step...*there is no occasion for embarking on mass civil disobedience, or non-payment*, which is one phase of it. The Congress workers will have taken the masses through a richer discipline by advising them to pay the rents due for the current period."[189] But the Congress leaders had little control over the situation that had developed.

In Uttar Pradesh (former United Provinces) a peasant movement, "anterior to and independent of" non-co-operation, swept some districts of Awadh (former Oudh)—Rae Bareli, Faizabad, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh. After the first phase had ended sometime in the first half of 1921, there was a resurgence of it in the second half and in the early months of 1922 in the districts of Hardoi, Sitapur, Kheri, Bahraich, Bara Banki and Lucknow.[190] "What was surprising" to Pandit Jawaharlal "was that this should have developed quite spontaneously without any city help or intervention of politicians and the like. The agrarian movement was entirely separate from the Congress and it had nothing to do with the non-co-operation that was taking shape."[101] No doubt, it could develop only because of the "total ignorance" of and absence of intervention by politicians like Nehru and Gandhi.

It was the poor peasants—tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers—who constituted the main force of the movement, which had thrown up its own leaders like Baba Ramchandra and Madari Pasi. The *kisan sabhas* they formed agreed to pay against receipts the recorded rent but not the various *abwabs* and refused to render *begar* which it had been the privilege of landlords to enjoy. The struggle turned into a veritable class war marked by violence and social boycott of the landlords. It is the peasants of the lower strata who marched long distances to seek an alliance with the Congress and helped Jawaharlal to find "the whole countryside afire with enthusiasm and full of a strange excitement."[102] Before the intervention by the city politicians like Jawaharlal, 585 panchayats or village arbitration boards had been set up in Pratapgarh district alone and parallel governments appeared in some places in Faizabad and Sultanpur districts.[103] "Columns of cavalry, artillery and infantry", as Jawaharlal reported, "were marched through the principal districts,"[104] and large peasant demonstrations were fired upon early in January 1921.

Initially, the intervention of city politicians like Nehru was helpful, but soon after they collaborated with the raj to curb its militancy and suppress it. They wanted to harness it to the Gandhi-led non-co-operation movement and preached non-violence and class collaboration. During his visit to Fyzabad on 10 February 1921, the mahatma "deplored the action of the kisans who committed violence" and "deprecated all attempts to create discord between landlords and tenants and *advised the tenants to suffer rather than fight*."[105] He also issued a long list of instructions for the peasants to comply with. Among his instructions were :

"We should influence our opponents by kindness, not by using physical force nor stopping their water supply nor the services of the barber and the washerman" ;

"We may not withhold taxes from Government or rent from the landlord";

"We are not at the present moment offering civil disobedience; we should, therefore, carry out all Government orders."[196]

In *Young India* of 25 May 1921, the mahatma advised the peasants that "The *kisan* movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the *kisans* and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them" and *scrupulously... abide by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such agreement is written or inferred from custom* [custom allowed the zamindars to enjoy *abwabs* and *begar*]."[197] Then, and always, Gandhi asked the oppressed and the enslaved not to stand up against oppression but to grovel at the feet of the oppressors.

Jawaharlal, too, spoke in the same vein. The Rae Bareli district political conference held in November 1920 with him as president desired "that tenants and zamindars should live in harmony through mutual goodwill and sympathy" and insisted "that although the recent Rent Act has made their position worse, still they [the tenants] should patiently bear all troubles, pay their rents and keep the welfare of the country in view."[198] The Administration Report of the United Provinces appreciated the services of the Jawaharlals: "Serious as these [*kisan*] disturbances have been, they would undoubtedly have been far more serious, had not the [Congress] leaders considered that the time had not yet come for pushing things to extremes."[199] The Nehrus' paper *Independent* held the same view: "For our part we believe that, but for the timely appearance of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the scene, the situation would have become more complicated."[200] "*The strengthening of the moderate Congress influence*," writes Gopal, "*was part of the same policy [of the Government] as marching troops through the district*; they were both intended to keep the *kisans* from passing wholly under the influence of the extremist agitators."[201] Gandhi appreciated Nehru's role in the U. P. peasant movement and said that Nehru's "*one purpose regarding the tenants has been to educate them to be patient and calm.*"[202]

In Malabar (now in Kerala), Moplah peasants, mostly poor and landless, rose arms in hand against the alien government and their feudal oppressors. The Moplah revolt against the agrarian conditions of which they were victims—lack of any occupancy right to the land they cultivated, eviction, enhancement of rent and so on—was almost endemic. The Moplah peasants, mostly poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers, happened to be Muslims while the landlords, the *jenmis*, were Hindus. This helped the government, the vested interests and many historians to paint the Moplah rebellion of 1921 in communal colours. The real causes of the rebellion were the acute post-war economic distress, the wave of anti-imperialist feeling in the country and the hopes of a new order that would free them from all oppression. It began in August 1921: the houses of the *jenmis* were attacked, telegraph lines were cut, railway lines uprooted and railway stations, police stations, post offices and banks either looted or burned. To quote D. N. Dhanagare, "By the end of August the whole of the interior of southern Malabar, with the exception of Palghat taluk, was under the control of the rebels, and the government had to ask the army to take over civil administration."[203] In one battle on 20 August, nearly 30,000 peasants, armed with all sorts of weapons, took part, Some Congress and Khilafat leaders were released from prison in August to exert their 'calming influence', but their efforts were of little help.[204] As expected, Gandhi decried the Moplah rebellion, "Their violence is likely to alarm us, it impedes our progress....I can see all the time that *the most serious obstacles in our path come not from the Government but from ourselves*....The complete victory of non-violent non-co-operation will be possible only if we conquer *this enemy inside us*."[205]

"As the rebellion had spread over a wide area", an official report stated, "the troops available in the Malabar district were unable to cope with the situation, and strong reinforcements had to be sent; and by the middle of October these amounted to four battalions, one pack battery, a section of armoured cars and other necessary ancillary services."[206] Appalling atrocities were committed on the people. Peasant women were outraged and murdered. Peasant rebels were hung on the wayside trees and left dangling there to strike terror into the hearts of the people. The extent of barbarity can be guessed from the fact that seventy Moplah prisoners, according to the above official report, were huddled into a closed railway wagon which had no arrangement for ventilation and were asphyxiated to death.[207] Guerrilla war continued until December.

Gandhi was worried also over what was happening in many other parts of the sub-continent like Malegaon in Nasik district and Aligarh. Then, about May 1921, the people of Chirala-Pirala in Andhra refused to pay certain municipal taxes despite imprisonment and confiscation of property. As the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee reported, "The property of the convicted persons has been attached and brought to sale a number of times. . But no bidders have come forward..." Gandhi wrote : "They [the people of Chirala Pirala] need not have done so. They might have waited for *swaraj*."[208]

Though Gandhi refused to permit civil disobedience in respect of the grazing tax in certain parts of Andhra, the peasantry disregarded the Congress injunctions and the forest laws, grazed their cattle on forest lands, and carried off forest produce in defiance of the laws.[209]

In January 1922 Andhra districts started a no-tax campaign. On learning of it, Gandhi sent a message to the president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee and issued a statement to the press asking the peasants to pay the taxes[210] But in Guntur district the campaign continued, even threats and intimidation by the military had no effect. But, meeting on 31 January, the Congress Working Committee "advised the people throughout the Provinces to pay up the taxes due by them to the Government whether directly, or indirectly through zamindars or talukdars—except in such cases of direct payment to the Government where previous consent had been obtained from Mahatma Gandhi for suspension of payment preparatory to mass Civil Disobedience.'[211] "It must be owned", wrote Sitaramayya, "that the non-payment campaign in Andhradesa was a thorough success, so far as the campaign went, for not even five per cent of the taxes were collected so long as the Congress ban was operative."[212]

In different parts of India struggles were waged also to re-establish lost rights over forests—the rights which had been taken away by the colonial state.[2124] The Forest Department, set up to deny the people their customary rights, served as an engine of oppression. It has already been noted that forest laws were defied in the forest areas of Chittagong and in parts of Andhra ; the Forest Department practically ceased to function in Chittagong. Bamford notes that there was a widespread disregard of forest regulations and laws in the Madras Presidency and in the Central Provinces and Assam.[2125] A powerful movement started in Kumaun in north Uttar Pradesh in 1920 to abolish the *begar* (forced labour) system under which men had to render *begar* to government officials and white *shikaris* and mountaineers. The struggle for lost rights over forests also became widespread in Kumaun in 1921 and spread to Garhwal. To force the government to capitulate, the people started forest fires and cut trees on a wide scale, and the government surrendered on both the issues. The *begar* system was abolished, and the government took away "large areas from the Forest Department" and placed "them under the control of the civil authorities who allowed villagers comparative freedom."[2126] Ramchandra Guha observes : "Apart from a hazy perception of Gandhi as a saint whose qualities of heroic sacrifice were invoked against the powers of government, the utar [*begar*] movements had little in the nature of an identification with the Congress as such."[2124] The hill-men's forms of struggle to regain their lost rights over forests would, no doubt, have greatly shocked the mahatma.

Anxious for a Settlement

Gandhi's problem was how to prevent people's struggles from breaking out. Khilafat and Congress workers and people in many areas, not satisfied with Gandhi's programme of renunciation of titles, boycott of law-courts and educational institutions, and installation of *charkhas* in homes, were continually straining at the leash. Many Congress committees were insisting on initiating the civil disobedience and no-tax movements.

Even at the Vijaywada (formerly Bezwada) AICC meeting, held at the end of March 1921, the "question of civil disobedience had been raised in several quarters", but Gandhi advised the Congress organizations to concentrate on collecting donations for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, enrolling members and introducing *charkhas* in villages and homes.[213]

At the Congress Working Committee meeting held at Allahabad on 12 May 1921, "according to confidential and reliable information", writes Bamford, "*Gandhi and Motilal were in favour of effecting a compromise with the Government*...but were opposed by Mohamad Ali and Lajpat Rai."[214] It was after this meeting that Gandhi sought interviews with the Viceroy and went to Simla to explain to him "the limits and the meaning of non-co-operation."

The pressure from different provinces for launching the civil disobedience movement began to mount, but the AICC meeting in Bombay at the end of July considered the time premature and, at Gandhi's instance, asked the Congress workers to concentrate on spinning and weaving.[215]

In early September Gandhi was writing to Vallabhbhai Patel: "Civil disobedience had better be postponed at least during this month." But, as Tendulkar writes, "even without his knowledge, the ground for courting imprisonment and 'inaugurating civil disobedience' was prepared at the Karachi Khilafat Conference[217] where historic resolutions with regard to the army and independence were passed. When Gandhi's attention was drawn to them, he said: '*Long before the Congress meets*,[218] if India proves true to herself, *I look forward not to declaration of independence but to an honourable settlement*...'"[219]

When Gandhi was anxious to arrive at a 'settlement' before he initiated any kind of direct action against the raj, there were others, besides the militant Khilafat leaders, who were seeking a confrontation. At the Congress Working Committee meeting on 5 October, N.C. Kelkar and most other members of the Committee put pressure on Gandhi to move on to civil disobedience including no-tax campaign. As before, Gandhi resisted the pressure on the ground that "the boycott of foreign cloth was as yet incomplete."[220] Soon after, he said at a public meeting that he "had erred in the April of 1919 in hastily embarking on civil disobedience. But he was knowing enough not to err twice about the same thing."[221] And he wrote: "*Until every province and every district spins and weaves the cloth it* *requires* and boycotts foreign cloth, *swaraj* will remain an impossibility."[222] Interestingly, a little later, presiding at the Gaya Congress in 1922, C R. Das observed : "I have not yet been able to understand why to enable a people to civilly disobey particular laws, it should be necessary that at least eighty per cent of them should be clad in pure 'Khadi' !"[223]

In Bihar, which earned Gandhi's praise as "a Province in which the most solid work is being done in connection with Non co-operation," no more than one per cent of the population wore Khadi.[224] Determined to avoid any confrontation with the raj as well as to silence the clamour of Congressmen and Khilafatists, the mahatma imposed a condition which he knew was impossible of fulfilment.

"Meanwhile", to quote Gandhi's British admirer Brailsford, "the tide of excitement was rising among the masses...he [Gandhi] dreaded an uncontrollable ferment...Gandhi, meanwhile, refused to give the signal for mass civil disobedience, which the people were eagerly awaiting..."[225]

Meeting on 4 and 5 November 1921, the AICC authorized every province on its own responsibility to undertake civil disobedience, provided certain possible and *impossible* conditions were fulfilled. One such condition was that "a vast majority of the population of a district or tahsil must have adopted *full* swadeshi and *must be clothed out of cloth hand-spun and hand-woven in that district or tahsil*..."[226]

But Gandhi told the meeting that "at present mass civil disobedience was impossible." He asked others to wait until he had conducted it in Bardoli, a taluk of 83,000 (or 87,000) persons including children. "It is equally as well", wrote the mahatma, "that civil disobedience is being *confined even now to the smallest area possible.*" He warned that "only when a citizen has disciplined himself in the art of voluntary obedience to the state laws is he justified *on rare occasions deliberately but non-violently to disobey them*...while fiercest disobedience is going on in a limited area, *perfect submission to the laws must be yielded in all the other parts*..."[227] He also advised them that if there was firing in Bardoli, "there should be no *hartal*, or trouble of any kind" in Bombay. "Then only could they have *swaraj*."[228]

But Gandhi's sermons hardly produced the effect he desired. *Hartal* was observed throughout India on 17 November when the Prince of Wales arrived in Bombay. In that city the people vented their wrath on the loyalists—Europeans, Eurasians, Parsis and other wealthy Indians—who were out to welcome the prince. Besides firing by the police and the military, the loyalists retaliated with fire-arms on Hindu and Muslim passers-by and killed and wounded a number of them. The clashes continued for five days.

"The *swaraj* that I have witnessed during the last two days," lamented the mahatma, "has stunk in my nostrils."[229] He denounced the people for what had happened and postponed the Bardoli no-tax campaign on the ground that the atmosphere was not congenial.

Throughout India the government's repressive measures became more severe than before. The complete success of the *hartal* in Calcutta and other urban areas, that greeted the prince, frightened the European community. Referring to Calcutta, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Bengal Government :

"The position of the movement is that the people are rapidly losing, if they have not already lost, all confidence in the Government established by law in the city..."[230]

The Congress and Khilafat volunteer organizations and various other associations were banned and for three months all public assemblies and processions in Calcutta were declared unlawful. The Seditious Meetings Act was introduced in Bengal, Bihar, Punjab, Assam and Burma. A large number of persons including C. R. Das, Lajpat Rai and Motilal were arrested ; within one month twenty-five thousand people were sent to prison. Prosecutions were launched against newspapers.[231]

The turn of events belied the mahatma's expectations. He lamented : "I had expected that we would not only discover the path during this year, but would also see the image of swaraj before our eyes, *would have arrived at a settlement with the rulers and, non co-operation having been withdrawn, would have commenced genuine co-operation.*" But, to his regret, they would have to pass through a more intense phase of non-co-operation before attaining "this happy position" ; but "this phase itself," he was confident, "will bring co-operation nearer."[232]

Gandhi complained that the government was breaking its pledge that there would be no interference, no repression, so long as the movement remained non-violent.[233]

What could the mahatma do to bring about a change in the heart of the raj ? Without reference to the Congress and the Khilafat Committee he dropped the demands for the 'redress' of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and for *swaraj* and declared : "The immediate issue is the right of holding public meetings and the right of forming associations for peaceful purposes...."[234] One could hope that 'the settlement' would be nearer.

In mid-December Viceroy Reading favourably responded to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's proposal that he should convene a round table conference with Gandhi and the 'liberal' leaders. The Prince of Wales was due to visit Calcutta on 24 December and the amazing success of the *hartal* in Calcutta on 17 November filled Reading with disquiet. He agreed that if the non-co-operation campaign was called off, the government would withdraw the repressive measures, release prisoners and call a round table conference.[235]

C. R. Das and Abul Kalam Azad were willing to accept the Viceroy's offer when they were approached in prison. *Gandhi, too, was not unwilling.* The draft of a telegram to Malaviya, which he dictated on 16 December but which was not sent, is significant : "If provoking orders disbandment and stopping public meetings withdrawn *present civil disobedience stops automatically.*"[236]

As Gandhi said on 24 December, he was "most anxious for a settlement" : he was prepared to "attend any conference *unconditionally,*" but if the government imposed conditions that were "suicidal" for him, he begged to be excused for not accepting them.[237]

Why did not Gandhi, despite his great anxiety for a settlement, accept Reading's offer ? What was the "suicidal" condition imposed upon him, to which he was unable to agree ?

The condition was that Gandhi would have to withdraw non-co-operation and *hartal* while the government would release non-co-operation prisoners *but not the Ali brothers,* whom Reading classed as *fatwa* prisoners, that is, prisoners who had been convicted for upholding the Ulemas' *fatwa* that it was irreligious for a Muslim to serve in the British Indian Army. Non-co-operation was inaugurated under the Khilafat auspices : *formal* withdrawal of non-co-operation by Gandhi keeping the Ali brothers, the most outstanding of the Khilafat leaders, behind bars would blacken Gandhi's image before the Muslims as nothing else could, and he would lose all control over them, which he had painstakingly built up. He was willing to attend the round table conference "*unconditionally*" but *formal* withdrawal of non-co-operation while the *fatwa* prisoners remained in prison seemed politically "suicidal" to him. He repeatedly suggested that such a *formal* withdrawal by him was unnecessary, for with the withdrawal by the government of repressive measures all offending activities of the Congress would cease, as the immediate objective of the Congress was neither *swaraj* nor the 'redress' of Khilafat and Punjab wrongs.

The Prince visited Calcutta on 24 December. When it was over, Reading felt no immediate need to reach a settlement with Gandhi. Besides, three or four seniormost British governors in India and the British cabinet were opposed to his move.[238]

So, despite Gandhi's great eagerness for a settlement, this attempt to bring it about could not but fall through. Critics of Gandhi on this point have failed to appreciate the mahatma's dilemma. M. R. Jayakar, who played a prominent role in the subsequent negotiations wrote : "...the attempt of reconciliation broke down at this time on the question of the release of the Ali Brothers and the *fatwa* prisoners and that, notwithstanding this failure, both the sides had come very near in a friendly spirit of reconciliation which unfortunately did not materialize at that time."[239]

On 20 December Rajagopalachari wrote to Gandhi : "The Prince must go back and then *in February we should think of settlement* after Gujarat [that is, the Bardoli taluk] has given an account of itself." Reproducing these lines from Rajagopalachari's letter, Gandhi stated : "I should not be surprised if we have many truces and settlements and several abortions before we come to the end."[240] Writing in *Young India* of 12 January 1922, Gandhi affirmed : "*Non-co-operation with our own humiliation by*

Englishmen must lead eventually to co-operation in friendship with them."[241]

With this faith undimmed the mahatma, on the one hand, continued to struggle to establish control over the movement and guide it along the channel of non-violent non-co-operation and, on the other, wanted the government to play their part in a "sportsmanlike" spirit. Great dangers seemed to him to lurk ahead and he unweariedly tried to avert them. He warned: "we dare not pin our faith solely to civil disobedience. It is like the use of a knife to be used most sparingly *if at all*."[242] He knew that the no-tax movement meant direct confrontation with the raj—no "sportsmanlike" affair. So he continually exhorted the peasants not to stop payment of rent to zamindars or of taxes to the government and instructed Congress workers to advise peasants not to do so. "Such non-payment," he said, "will not be civil or non-violent, but it will be criminal or fraught with the greatest possibility of violence."[243] Gandhi's argument against non-payment of revenue or rent was a highly moral one. "In Gujarat", he wrote, "as also in the rest of the country, it is being debated whether the people should withhold payment of land revenue.....Anyone who refuses to pay taxes with a view to saving money is certainly a thief, and we shall not win *swaraj* with the help of thieves. Such *swaraj* will be a government of thieves."[244]

Gandhi heard "warning voise from Bengal"—warning "against countenancing a general non-payment movement" which, he feared, was "quite likely in Bengal as most of the leaders are in jail." In his message to Congress workers of Bengal he advised them to "assert the right of free speech and free association" but not to embark on mass civil disobedience or non-payment.[245]

Gandhi insisted that the no-tax movement should be left to him to conduct *only* in Bardoli. As the clamour from various quarters for launching civil disobedience grew loud, he warned that when "the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be *guarded by all conceivable restrictions*. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. *Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case*."[246]

The main resolution moved by Gandhi at the Ahmedabad Congress session at the end of 1921 appointed "until further instructions, Mahatma Gandhi as *the sole executive authority of the Congress*."[247] Speaking at the meeting of the Subjects Committee, he said that "there is nothing in the main resolution which bangs the door in the face of the Viceroy or anybody who wants a round table conference."[248] This was repeated by him at the open session.[249]

Hasrat Mohani moved two amendments—one proposing the attainment of *swaraj* by all possible and proper means in place of peaceful and legitimate means, and the other declaring "*swaraj* or complete independence, free from all foreign control" as the goal of the Congress. The second amendment "proved to be the main bone of contention." Opposing it, the mahatma said that "his hope of getting redress of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs through the British Government" had become brighter than "at any time 15 months ago." He chided Mohani for "raising a false issue" and for "throwing a bombshell in the midst of the Indian atmosphere" and criticized the supporters of the amendment for "the levity with which that proposition has been taken."[250]

In his telegram to the Secretary of State the Viceroy noted with satisfaction that the resolutions of the Congress "not only rejected the proposals which the extreme wing of the Khilafat party had advanced for abandoning the policy of non-violence but omitted any reference to the non-payment of taxes."[251] Palme Dutt observes that the retreat began at Ahmedabad.[252] But, for Gandhi, it was no retreat, for he had never intended to advance. Non-violent non-co-operation which, as Gandhi repeatedly pointed out, was a temporary phase, was his way of tackling the Khilafat issue and the 'Bolshevik' menace. "The Government," he wrote, "have hitherto credited me with good intentions. . They have professed no distrust of my motives. Everybody has testified to the fact that my presence has everywhere a peaceful effect."[253] The Government of India's Intelligence Bureau held the same view. Bamford observed : "There can be little doubt that but for Gandhi's advocacy of peaceful methods, outbreaks of violence by fanatical Mahammadans would have been much more common than they were, for the Khilafat leaders themselves were by no means peacefully inclined."[254]

When the demand for launching the civil disobedience movement became insistent when the no-tax or no-rent movements were being started by local Congressmen (in Bengal or Andhra) or by the people themselves, independently of Congress control, Gandhi promised to lead a no tax movement in Bardoli—not to advance the struggle but to restrict the area and the scope to the barest minimum. "Some people," wrote Gandhi, "tell me that the whole of Gujarat is ready to suspend payment of revenue and ask me if I would not advise them to do so. I can give no such advice.... All people in the rest of the country will be paying revenue..."[255] Even then he would not start the campaign in that small area of his choice. Originally, the date was fixed for 23 November 1921, but he shifted it from time to time: "on each occasion [he] had been able to find some excuse to postpone it."[256] He does not seem to have really contemplated a no-tax movement in Bardoli.

While negotiations for a settlement continued, Gandhi was quite anxious to avoid giving the least offence to the government. In *Young India* of 29 December 1921 he pointed out that "shouts of *Bande Mataram* or any other in breach of jail discipline are unlawful for a non-co-operator to indulge in."[257] On 30 December he said to U. P. Congress leaders: "Picketing of shops selling foreign cloth is unnecessary."[258] In *Navajivan* of 8 January 1922, he wrote: "When, therefore, the Prince [of Wales] visits an Indian State, the public should not declare a hartal or hold a protest meeting."[259]

By this time Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas provided Gandhi with a fresh opportunity to extricate himself from the impasse.[260] On 14 and 15 January 1922 Gandhi represented the Congress at the 'Leaders' Conference' in Bombay, convened by Pandit Malaviya, Jinnah, Jayakar, Thakurdas, Ambalal Sarabhai and others. The purpose of the conference was to bring about a compromise between the raj and the Congress and to secure the withdrawal of the non-co-operation movement. Speaking on the Leaders' Conference Gandhi did "assure the Viceroy and everybody concerned that the Congressmen or non-co-operators are as reasonable beings as may be found on earth or in India."[261] Referring to this conference, Gandhi again wrote: "*A non-co-operator does not let go a single opportunity for co-operation.*"[262] At the conference he "appealed to the Moderates and the Independents [who, interestingly, were all opposed to non-co-operation and were anxious for its withdrawal] to form a link between the Government and the non-co-operators "[263]

The conference appointed a committee to negotiate with the Viceroy, and Gandhi agreed to advise the Congress Working Committee to stop mass civil disobedience till 31 December 1922, to suspend "preparatory activities of an offensive, hostile or provocative character...pending" round table conference, etc.[264] On the other hand, he wanted the government to release all non-co-operation prisoners, including *fatwa* prisoners, to remove the ban on volunteer organizations and call a round table conference. These were terms that would form the basis of negotiations with the Viceroy.

Meeting on 17 January the Congress Working Committee postponed the launching of "offensive civil disobedience" till 31 January or pending the result of the negotiations for a round table conference. The Government of India's Home Department correctly anticipated that "At present it seems clear Gandhi does not propose to take this step."[265]

A conference of 4,000 representatives of Bardoli taluk met on 29 January and, though Gandhi, Vithalbhai Patel and some workers wanted to postpone the movement by another fortnight, it resolved to start immediately mass civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes.[266] Gandhi watched the government's "conduct with wonder and admiration" for it did neither prohibit the conference nor arrest the workers. And he prayed:

"Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on."[267]

The Prayer Answered

The night became murkier before it was dawn. The attempt to negotiate a somewhat respectable withdrawal proved unavailing:

the government proved obdurate. Gandhi found himself between two worlds—the world of the Readings who would not relent and the world of "mischievous elements and the forces of violence" over which he had not "acquired sufficient control."[268] A violent incident in Madras on the occasion of the Prince's visit to that city, the mahatma feared, "means that when the Government relinquishes power, it is the rowdies who will rule, not we."[269]

In his letter of 1 February to the Viceroy, Gandhi wrote that it was the Government's repressive policy that was forcing the Congress to resort to civil disobedience, which would "at present" be "confined only to Bardoli." *He promised to suspend it* if the government set free all the non-co-operating prisoners, ensured press freedom and followed its previous "policy of strictest neutrality" and of non-interference with all non-violent activities. He had dropped the demands for *swaraj* and for 'redress' of Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. Now he dropped the demand for a round table conference.[270]

The gloom became thicker when the Government of India issued on 6 February a harsh communique. Far from responding to his appeal, it warned him "Mass civil disobedience is fraught with such dangers to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity."[271]

While informing the government on 7 February of the decision to start civil disobedience from 11 February, Gandhi pleaded that "what I now ask against *total* suspension of civil disobedience of an aggressive character is *merely* the stoppage of ruthless repression, the release of prisoners convicted under it and a clear declaration of policy....*this waiving of a round table conference* does not proceed from any expedience but *is a confession of present weakness.*"[272]

The stage seemed set for a confrontation, a trial of strength—at least that is what both friends and enemies supposed. But next day—8 February—the news of the Chauri-Chaura happenings reached the mahatma. "God spoke clearly through Chauri-Chaura," the mahatma claimed.[273]

Chauri and Chaura, two neighbouring villages in the district of Gorakhpur, suddenly leapt into fame on 4 February 1922. "The lowest strata of society," comprising both Hindus and Muslims, had organized themselves under a Circle Committee to take part in what they believed to be a struggle against the raj.[274] On 1 February some volunteers, picketing liquor and other shops at a local bi-weekly market, were abused and thrashed by the police. On 4 February three to four thousand villagers, belonging mostly to the humblest strata of the rural society, were mobilized by the Circle Committee to hold a demonstration in front of the Chaura police station to protest against the police action. At the intervention of certain persons, the demonstrators started moving away when those in the rear were roughly handled by the police. The others returned, the police fired upon them until their stock of ammunition was exhausted and then took shelter within the police station. At least three demonstrators were killed in the police firing. The villagers retaliated by setting fire to the police station and about twenty-two policemen were killed.[275]

Immediately on learning of this incident on 8 February, 'the sole executive authority of the Congress' dashed off letters to the members of the Congress Working Committee letting them know that he "personally can never be a party to a movement half violent and half non-violent" and convening a meeting of the committee for 11 February to decide whether mass civil disobedience should be discontinued.[276] Some of the prominent members—Das, Motilal and Lajpat Rai—were in prison, and Gandhi did not certainly expect some others to receive his letters and to travel to Bardoli and attend the meeting in time.

After despatching the letters, Gandhi rushed on the same day to Bombay to meet Malaviya, Jinnah, Jayakar, Natarajan and others, who had, from the beginning, been opposing non-co-operation. He brought Malaviya, Jayakar and Natarajan to attend the Working Committee meeting.

Interestingly, Gandhi also saw 'that super-imperialist' George Lloyd, Bombay's governor, who admonished him: "I told you what would happen. You are responsible." According to Lloyd, "He [the mahatma] covered his face with his hands and said, 'I know it...Put me in gaol, Your Excellency', he moaned."[277]

On 10 February, the eve of the Working Committee meeting, Gandhi held a meeting of the Congress workers of Bardoli, all of whom, except three, opposed his decision to "immediately stop the movement for civil disobedience."[278]

Gandhi put 'his doubts and troubles' before the Working Committee on 11 February with Malaviya, Jayakar and Natarajan attending. The members of the committee who attended "did not agree with him, but at his request it was decided to cancel the programme of mass civil disobedience."[279]

The Working Committee resolutions, "presumably drafted by Gandhiji," deplored "the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura" and tendered its sympathy to the families of the bereaved." (It did not deplore the conduct of the police which provoked "the inhuman conduct of the mob" nor did it tender any sympathy to the bereaved families of the victims of police firing). While suspending "the mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli," the committee instructed "the local Congress Committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government" and to ask the ryots not to withhold rents to the zamindars. It assured the zamindars that "the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights."[280]

Simultaneously with the publication of the resolutions, Gandhi announced a fast for four days—obviously to soften their impact on the people.

In his article "The Crime of Chauri Chaura", Gandhi claimed that "the crime of Chauri Chaura" was the last of a series of *divine* warnings he had and that his *life-long* passionate devotion to the ideal of non-violence prompted him to withdraw the movement. The mahatma, who had wanted a short while before to "make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire"[281] and who called for "twenty recruits from every village" as cannon-fodder during his campaign as a recruiting sergeant, felt greatly perturbed and was warned by God when some minor incidents of violence occurred as the masses dared to join what they believed to be an anti-imperialist struggle.

While denouncing "the murderers" of Chauri Chaura for hampering his '*swaraj* operations", the mahatma advised them to hand themselves voluntarily to the Government for punishment and make a clean confession". In case his advice was not heeded by "the murderers", he instructed the Congress workers "*to leave no stone unturned to find out the evil-doers* and urge them to deliver themselves into custody."[262] He wired a similar instruction to his son, Devdas Gandhi, who then happened to be in Gorakhpur.[263]

That was the way of the mahatma. He was not content merely with condemning militant fighters against the imperialist regime, he also tried to hand them over to their jailors and executioners. Gandhi did so during the Rowlatt satyagraha[264]; he did so now after Chauri Chaura; he would do the same thing after the 'Quit India' movement on his release from detention in the Aga Khan Palace. It appears that Nehru, too, emulated Gandhi on a different occasion.[265]

In Gorakhpur 225 villagers were arrested and 172 of them were sentenced to death by the sessions court. On appeal, the judgement was revised, and nineteen villagers were executed and most others transported for life. There was not even a whimper of protest from the non-violent 'nationalists'—the Gandhis and Nehrus. And a memorial that stands there honours the memory of the police 'martyrs'![266]

The voice of protest against "this imperialist butchery" was raised by the Communist International and other proletarian organizations of Europe. M. N. Roy's *Vanguard* correctly forecast: "The martyrs of Chauri Chaura would not receive any better fate even in a Gandhite *swaraj*."[266a]

When numerous correspondents reported to Gandhi on large-scale police atrocities in Chauri, Chaura and neighbouring villages, Gandhi described them as "unjustified" (not "diabolical crimes", as he had described the villagers' retaliatory actions) and prescribed that "the remedy with the people is to *love* the police in spite of their atrocities and to wean them from their *error*."[267]

As we have noted, non-violence had a dual aspect in practice. On the one hand, it insisted that the oppressed should cherish love, abundant love, for the oppressors; on the other, it helped even physical elimination of those among the oppressed who dared to challenge the regime of the oppressors.

Reaction to the Bardoli Decision

Though non-co-operation had been inaugurated under the Khilafat auspices, it was suspended without any reference to that organization. There was resentment against the decision. Zahur Ahmed of the Central Khilafat Committee informed Gandhi in a telegram from Bombay of the "current agitation" in that city against his decision.[288] Dr Syed Mahmud, Secretary, Central Khilafat Committee, and Congress leader from Bihar, wired to Gandhi: "Working Committee's decision published today greatly surprising. People in Bengal and Bihar are disappointed: Great anxiety prevails."[289]

C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai strongly resented the decision. Referring at the AICC meeting held towards the end of February to the letters from Motilal and Lajpat Rai strongly condemning the Bardoli resolution, Gandhi said that those who went to jail were civilly dead.[290]

Despite all his sophistry, there was at the AICC meeting (as well as throughout India), to quote Gandhi's own words, "deep disappointment and even strong resentment"—a "hurricane of opposition"—for which he "was totally unprepared."[291] Moonje charged, not unjustly, that since the beginning of non-co-operation, "the leaders had been playing ducks and drakes with the honour and prestige of the country and the Bardoli resolution had brought them to the lowest depth of degradation."[292] According to Tendulkar, Gandhi "realized that the majority was not backing him sincerely. He knew that some of those who voted for him called him 'dictator' behind his back."[292a]

Replying to the criticism of "the impatient Mussalmans", Gandhi wrote:

"If the Mussalmans consider that they can gain their end by force of arms, *let them secede from the non-violent alliance by all means.*"[293]

Why was the Movement Discontinued?

Defending Gandhi's decision, Jawaharlal has observed: "At that time our movement, in spite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces."[294] Was this a correct appreciation of the political situation in India or was it made in total disregard of all facts ? Gopal writes that, when the movement was withdrawn, "Jawaharlal, like most others, was bitterly disappointed, especially as the campaign in his own province had been mustering strength."[295] Not only in U. P. but in Bengal, Andhra and other places, the anti-imperialist struggle was "mustering strength." And not only was the demand for launching the no-tax movement being raised by various Congress committees but the no-rent and no-tax movements and the struggles to regain the lost rights in forest areas, independent of the control of Congress committees, had been spreading. Speaking of Bengal, Rajat Kanta Ray writes that "even the district Congress committees seemed powerless to control 'the great wave of lawlessness' which swept over the affected areas in East and West Bengal. ...All the police reports suggest that on the eve of the decision to stop the movement, the rural control was collapsing over large parts of Bengal.... The [Government of Bengal's] fortnightly report for the second half of February commented fearfully on the growing spirit of lawlessness both in towns and districts which the Congress element is utterly unable to control or direct."[296]

The Government of Bengal's fortnightly report for the first half of January 1922 had also struck the same note of alarm :

"The situation remains volcanic. Both in Calcutta and in the mufassil the attempt to discredit law and order by the use of every weapon continues, and below there is a strong undercurrent of disorderly elements, mainly Muhammadan, which is steadily carrying the whole mass towards violence."[297]

We have already quoted from Bengal Governor Ronaldshay's letter of 9 February 1922 to the Secretary of State, which stated that the rural people were "not only refusing to pay rent and taxes but also repudiating their debts !"[298]

At the beginning of 1922, writes Bamford, "reports from officials from all over India were steadily growing more pessimistic in tone and it was very apparent that the resources of Government were being taxed to their utmost."[299]

On 9 February, two days before the Working Committee's decision to stop the movement, the Viceroy wired to Whitehall :

"The lower classes in the towns have been seriously affected by the non-co-operation movement....In certain areas the peasantry have been affected, particularly in parts of the Assam Valley, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and Bengal. As regards the Punjab, the Akali agitation has penetrated to the rural Sikhs. A large proportion of the Mohammedan population throughout the country are embittered and sullen... The Government of India are prepared for disorder of a more formidable nature than has in the past occurred, and do not seek to minimise in any way the fact that great anxiety is caused by the situation."[200]

David Petrie, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, from 1924 to 1931, described the non-co-operation movement as "an upheaval which...shook our authority as it has seldom been shaken." He observed that nobody could "question the accuracy of [M.N.] Roy's description of the Non-co-operation Movement as a serious challenge to the authority of the British Government, in the course of which 'the horizon was ablaze with the smouldering flames of peasant revolt'."[201] It was these peasant revolts which, like the raj, the mahatma feared most.

Gandhi "gave us a scare!" remarked Bombay Governor Lloyd, "His programme filled our jails....And if they had taken his next step and refused to pay taxes! God knows where we should have been!"[202]

Gandhi had been anxious for a settlement much earlier. If the Intelligence Bureau report[203] is correct, then he wanted a compromise as early as May 1921. The series of his interviews with Reading in May, his hope of "an honourable settlement" and of non-co-operation leading to co-operation repeatedly expressed, the repeated shifting of dates for starting civil disobedience in Bardoli, his refusal to permit no-tax movements in other areas, his anxiety to avoid any confrontation with the government, his change of the goal of the movement to vindication of the right of assembly and the right of association, *his commitment to the Leaders' Conference Committee about three weeks before Chauri Chaura to suspend mass civil disobedience* and restrict other activities like picketing to the barest minimum and his hope of a settlement through the mediation of Malaviya, Jayakar and others, his appeal to the 'Moderates' to serve as a link between the government and the Congress and so on reflected his extreme eagerness to stop the movement quite some time before it was stopped. Chauri Chaura actually served as the much-needed peg on which Gandhi could hang his decision to discontinue the movement – a "pretext," as Bamford remarked. Indeed, God had spoken clearly to the mahatma much earlier than Chauri Chaura, though Chauri Chaura proved a godsend to him when the raj proved obdurate. *It enabled him to raise the whole issue from the merely mundane to the high spiritual plane—a major advantage.*

The Bourgeoisie and Non-co-operation

It has been already noted that at the Calcutta Special Congress and at Nagpur non-co-operation found the comprador merchants who dealt in Lancashire piece-goods among its enthusiastic supporters. It was not the goal of *swaraj* that attracted them but the prospect of ruin because of the steep fall in exchange rates, which induced them *to refuse* to fulfil their contracts with their European principals and to non-co-operate with them. In Bombay cotton brokers (whom A. D. D. Gordon calls 'marketeers') other than big cotton brokers like Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Seth C. B. Mehta, who were 'market allies' of cotton mill owners, as well as shroffs became non-co operators. Between the cotton brokers on the one hand and the millowners, their 'market allies' and big European and Indian exporters of raw cotton on the other hand, a tussle had been going on for control of the Bombay cotton market. The latter sought to restrict the speculative activities of the brokers and stabilize prices of raw cotton. In this struggle the millowners and their market allies enjoyed the support of the Government.[304]

In the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, two contending forces emerged. The foreign piece-goods merchants, cotton brokers, shroffs, prominent grain merchants and so on, aggrieved over government policies, especially over the issues like currency, exchange and control over the Bombay cotton market, lent their support in 1921 to the Congress policy of non-co-operation. The Committee of the Chamber decided to present an address of welcome to the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit in November

1921, but opposition came from the 'marketeers' and their allies. At the general meeting of the Chamber, "the address was approved by one vote only, the casting vote of the Chairman," Lalji Naranji, a millowner, merchant and real estate-owner.[805]

As Gordon writes, "the industrialists as *traditional allies of government*, rallied to its side". Bombay millowners such as Sir D. E. Wacha, Sir Homi Mody, Sir Cowasji Jehangir Jr. and Sir Fuzulbhoy Currimbhoy signed a manifesto decrying non-co-operation. An 'Anti-Non-co operation League' was set up by the 'liberals' and the big bourgeois among whom were Thakurdas, Sir C. V. Mehta, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Wacha and R. D Tata. Thakurdas became one of its honorary secretaries and its campaign was financed generously by R. D. Tata.[806]

It is worth noting that Gandhi's Gujarati and Marwari benefactors were getting restive. Among the conveners of the Leaders' Conference, the sole purpose of which was to put an end to the movement, were Ambalal Sarabhai and Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas. According to an Intelligence Bureau report, dated 13 August 1921, business magnates like G. D. Birla, Sukhlal Karnani and Kesoram Poddar were voicing the Marwari businessmen's demand for an end to the movement. Devi Prasad Khaitan, who was very close to Birla, told Gandhi that, as businessmen, they could not afford to face ruin. The boycott of foreign cloth and the steamship and railway strikes in Bengal were harming the interests not only of European businessmen but also of their Marwari brokers and *banians*,[807] as exchange rates started improving. On 7 September, Calcutta's Marwari compradors told Gandhi at a conference with them that they would abide by the resolution of the Marwari Chamber of Commerce not to buy and sell foreign cloth until 31 December 1921. But his request to them not to fix "any specified time limit" remained unheeded.[808] 'Marketeers' were withdrawing their support to non-co-operation. Some of them broke the pledge much earlier. As their spokesman, Padmaraj Jain, warned a conference of non-co-operators in Calcutta that renewal of picketing would lead to a confrontation with them.[809] As Sullivan noted, harmony between imperialist capital and its compradors returned early in 1922.[810]

One cannot too much stress the fact that it was Gandhi's mission to curb all militant anti-imperialist elements, whom he described variously at different times as "unruly elements," "mischievous elements," "rowdies," "evil-doers," "the rabble" and so on. Like the big bourgeoisie and big landlords, he was afraid that, if they were not brought under control, they might "rule, not we," "when the Government relinquishes power."[311] In his article "The Crime of Chauri Chaura", he wrote: "Suppose the 'non-violent' disobedience of Bardoli was permitted by God to succeed, the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli, who would control the unruly element...?"[312] It is worth quoting what Harindranath Chattopadhyaya wrote: "Gandhiji at the Belgaum Congress [1924], while seated in a tent, surrounded by leaders including Ali brothers, remarked to the younger: 'Shaukat, if I had not called off the Civil Disobedience Movement, for which people blame me, you and I would not have been sitting here today.' I was there, I heard it. It was most revealing."[313]

It is not without significance that the raj left Gandhi, the supreme leader, free during the entire period of non-co-operation. But in March 1922, when his work was done, he was arrested and the judge sentenced him to imprisonment for six years. (He was actually in prison for about two years). "The British Government," wrote Gandhi's British admirer, Brailsford, "saved him by a public trial and a heavy sentence from the unpopularity that might have engulfed him."[314] And Judith Brown has commented: "Only gaol saved him from a fall from power as ignominious as his rise to power had been startling."[315]

When the people outside were left to bear the brunt of official repression and when demoralization, frustration and resentment at the sudden withdrawal of the movement prevailed, the mahatma, as he himself said, enjoyed himself in the prison, felt "boundless peace", "perfect peace" and was "as happy as a bird."[316]

The Dual Character of the Movement

P. Hardy has observed: "Hindus and Muslims were fairly launched not upon a common struggle but upon a joint struggle; they worked together, but not as one."[317] This was partly true and partly untrue. So far as the leaders were concerned, it was a joint struggle, not a common struggle. First, there were separate Congress and Khilafat organizations, though many leading Khilafatists were prominent Congressmen and though the Khilafatists had accepted Gandhi as their leader as a price for the Hindu support which they were eager to obtain.[318] Second, the main aims, too, seemed different. While the chief aim of the Khilafatists was the redress of the Khilafat wrongs, the chief Congress aim was the attainment of *swaraj*. But to Gandhi, who was actually the dictator of the Congress, *swaraj* was hardly an important consideration. "If, however, we do not wish to fight it out with the Muslims", wrote Gandhi, "if we wish to live with them as with our own brothers, if we would ensure protection of cows, of our temples and our women by winning over their hearts and through a friendly approach, we should welcome the opportunity we have today. The like of it will not come again for a hundred years."[319] (It was hardly flattering to the Muslims that, unless the Hindus helped the Khilafat cause, the Muslims would be a danger to their cows, their temples and their women !) He repeatedly declared that he had "made the Khilafat cause my own because I see that through its preservation full protection can be secured for the cow."[320] He claimed that "with us both the Khilafat is the central fact, with Maulana Mahomed Ali because it is his religion, with me because in laying down my life for the Khilafat I ensure the safety of the cow, that is my religion, from the Mussulman knife."[321] Pandering as always to the worst religious passions of the people, the mahatma wrote : "...the vast majority of Hindus and Mussulmans have joined the struggle believing it to be religious. The masses have come in because they want to save the Khilafat and the cow. Deprive the Mussulman of the hope of helping the Khilafat and he will shun the Congress : tell the Hindu he cannot save the cow if he joins the Congress, he will to a man leave it."[322]

Gandhi was not alone in trying to exploit the worst religious prejudices. In November 1920, Jawaharlal said to an audience : "Now the question before you is whether you would or would not co-operate with a government—the British Government—which is now attacking your religion."[323] Speaking to an audience, mainly Hindu, at the Bundelkhand conference in June 1921, why they should support the Khilafat cause, the Pandit said : "Because if the English succeeded in destroying the Muslim religion, they will try to destroy your religion, our religion, the Hindu religion."[324] At another meeting he said that most of the cows were killed to feed European soldiers, who "cannot live without beef."[325]

According to a report of the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Gandhi had reached an understanding with Maulana Abdul Bari, a Muslim religious divine and Pan-Islamic leader, that "the Hindu politicians would espouse the cause of Turkey and the Muhammedans would refrain from slaughtering kine."[326] The Muslim League session held at Amritsar in December 1919 adopted a resolution asking Muslims not to kill cows on the occasion of their religious festival, *Bakr Id*.[327] Militant Muslim leaders were asking their co-religionists to refrain from killing cows so as not to wound the susceptibilities of the Hindu cow-worshippers.

Whenever Gandhi spoke to Muslims or on the Hindu-Muslim question, he did so as a Hindu—not as an Indian, not as the leader of a united people. His entire approach to the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity was vitiated by communal considerations and religious obscurantism. He declared : "I hold my religion dearer than my country and...therefore I am a Hindu first and nationalist after."[328] Speaking "To the Mussulmans of India," he said that the "brave [Ali] Brothers are staunch lovers of their country, but they are Mussulmans first and everything else afterwards. It must be so with every religiously-minded man."[329]

With Hindu-Muslim unity ever on his lips, he always harped on the separate identities of the Hindus and Muslims. He affirmed : "Hindus should not depend wholly on the Muslims' good sense. Nor should the Muslims be frightened by the meanness of some Hindus. Each community should rely on its own strength and help the other."[330] In a letter, dated 25 September 1920, Gandhi wrote : "In view of the happy relations existing between the *two races*, we do not consider it necessary to make any special provision for their [the Muslims'] representation [in the Congress]."[331] While arguing at the Calcutta Special Congress for boycott of legislative councils, Gandhi pointed out that the Muslim League had already resolved to boycott them and recognized the League as the representative organisation of one fourth of the Indian population—the Muslims.[332]

In those days when Gandhi was at the height of his popularity among Hindus as well as Muslims and was far from being completely alienated from the latter as he afterwards was, he never claimed to represent them. "During these days of great trial for me," he wrote, "I have felt the gravest need of Maulana Shaukat Ali by my side. *I can wield no influence over the Musulmans except through a Musulman.*"[333] To quote him again, "But to think of placating the Musulmans without placating the [Ali] Brothers is to attempt to ignore Islam in India."[334] When he was about to stop the movement after Chauri Chaura, he made a very profound observation:

"What a great difference there is between the views of a Hindu and those of a Muslim! When one looks upon it as his *dharma* to face the east when praying, the other faces the west; while the one grows a *shikha* on his head, the other grows a beard."[335]

To Gandhi, the non-co-operation movement was not a great anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian people, irrespective of caste and creed—"not anti-British, not even anti-government," as he said—but a religious movement, the outcome of a "compact" between the two communities. He spoke of his "*alliance* with the Ali brothers."[336] Referring to a speech by Mahomed Ali, Gandhi wrote that Mahomed Ali could not have meant more than what Gandhi suggested "so long as the Hindu-Muslim *compact* subsists. The Muslims are free to dissolve the compact."[337]

The methods also somewhat differed. When Gandhi extolled non-violence in thought, word and deed, the militant Khilafatist leaders accepted it as a policy for a temporary period. Addressing the All India Muslim League session at the end of 1920 at Nagpur, Mohamed Ali said: "If the existence of the evil could not be removed without violence, it must be removed with violence. Force could be used to defeat force." Hasrat Mohani also affirmed that the time might come when violence would be required to fight the government.[338]

Conventional historiography sedulously spreads the myth that Gandhi was the builder of the Indian nation—"the father of the nation." Apart from the question whether such a nation exists or India is a multinational state, the fact is that Gandhi's theory and practice were good not in building a nation but in unbuilding it. These served not in integrating people of different castes and creeds into one nation but in dividing them. (More of it later). Here we would note that during the non-co-operation days Gandhi's purpose was to build a Hindu-Muslim "compact" on the shifting sands of religious passions and to gain control over the masses. Instead of emphasizing the common economic and political interests of the masses and leading them in an anti-imperialist struggle, he emphasized all the time their religious and communal differences and sought to contain their struggles against the alien rulers as best as he could. The result of his activities soon proved disastrous.

But in many places, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles were knitting the different sections of the exploited and oppressed people into one composite fabric. These struggles of "the rabble" against the raj and its domestic allies were not joint but common struggles. The aim was the same, the method was the same. It was their aim to overthrow the existing regime : their method was peaceful and non-peaceful struggle wedded together. The protracted strikes of the employees of the steamship company and the railwaymen in Bengal in 1921, the no-rent and no-tax campaigns in various places, and so on were the common struggles of the workers, peasants and other working people, irrespective of caste and creed ; these were directed against their common enemies and during the struggles the blood of the different communities mingled just as it had done in the Punjab and elsewhere in 1919. Those were the struggles which were opposed both by the raj and by Gandhi and his lieutenants. Significantly, the Circle Committee that was set up only three weeks before the Chauri-Chaura happenings and that played a catalytic role in them included both Muslims and Hindus. They came mainly from "the lowest strata of society" and hardly knew how to write even a letter.[339] And among those who were fired upon and killed by the police on 4 February and among those who were afterwards executed were both Hindus and Muslims.[340] The mahatma always feared and hated such "evil-doers", such "rabble" and their "unholy combination" and co-operated with the raj to punish their impudence. Facts show that not endless sermons on Hindu-Muslim unity and negotiations among the elite leaders but class struggle against both the foreign bourgeoisie and the native big bourgeoisie and landlords could alone forge the unity of the people.

Conventional historiography upholds the claim of Gandhi, Nehru and others that it is the mahatma who roused the people from their slumber. This is a travesty of truth. Various factors like the long-cherished hatred for the raj and the native exploiting classes, the objective conditions during the war and after—the severe exploitation and oppression—and the impact of the Russian Revolution were inevitably giving rise to a seething discontent among the people and to a spirit of resistance. A wave of industrial strikes and peasant revolts had started long before Gandhi's call for non-co-operation. As noted before, the basic masses were actually left out of his programme of non-co-operation. The items of his programme like renunciation of titles and boycott of law courts by lawyers were dismal failures. Gandhi's *khadi* programme had little impact on the people though it earned good profits for the big bourgeois, who supported it with generous funds. The boycott of elections to the new legislative councils was a greater success and the boycott of foreign cloth was partially so. What made the movement really great was the struggles of the people which Gandhi strongly disapproved and denounced. Ironically, it was on the crest of these struggles that Gandhi and his lieutenants rode to popularity and power.

It is true that Gandhi's call for non-co-operation, despite his protestations that it was not "anti-British" or "anti-government", touched the hearts of the militant people and evoked widespread response for which the subjective and objective factors had already prepared them. The brakes that he applied and his diversionary manoeuvres sought to contain and disrupt what the initial call helped to arouse, and the ultimate withdrawal left the people in a state of bewilderment, mutual distrust and internecine strife.

NOTES

1 B. R. Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire 1880-1935", op cit, 349.
2 Ibid, 350.
3 C. Dewey, "The End of Imperialism of Free Trade", in Clive Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (eds.), *The Imperial Impact*, 42-3.
4 D. R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times*, 237.
5 Palme Dutt, op cit, 276.
6 Masselos, "Some Aspects of Bombay City Politics", in R. Kumar, (ed). *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, 186.
7 Buchanan, op cit, 209 ; also 208-10.
8 See A. K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900-1939*, 276.
9 Goswami, op cit.
10 E. S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary* (entry dated 29 Feb. 1918), 363 : cited in R. C. Majumdar, op cit, II, 475.
11 J. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 137.
12 GOI, *Terrorism in India*, 12.
13 Arnold, "Looting, Grain Riots and Government Policy in South India 1918", *Past and Present*, No. 84, Aug. 1979. The sentence quoted is on p. 111.
14 Swapan Dasgupta, "Adivasi Politics in Midnapur, c. 1760-1924", in R. Guha (ed), op cit, IV, 123-4.
15 Rajat Kanta Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, 242.
16 Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit, I ; D. N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India 1920-1950*, Ch. V.
17 Ravinder Kumar, "The Bombay Textile Strike, 1919", *IESHR*, March 1971.
18 Palme Dutt, op cit, 333.
19 See R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 743-6.
20 Ibid.
21 Misra, *The Indian Political Parties*, 163.
22 *CWG*, XV, 331.
23 See P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-co-operation and Khilafat Movements*, 6.
24 *CWG*, XVI, 339, 445-8.
25 Richard Gordon, "Non-co-operation and Council Entry, 1919 to 1920", in John Gallagher *et al* (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation*, 126 ; H. F. Owen, "Organising for the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919", in R. Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, 68-70.
26 Ibid, see also *CWG*, XV, 96, 101-3.
27 Ibid, XVII, 153.
28 Ibid, XV, 107.
29 Ibid, 105-6.
30 Ibid, 171-6.
31 Ibid, 121-2 ; see also 126-7.

32 Ibid, 127 ; see also Masselos, op cit, 174.

33 Owen, op cit, 79 ; he quotes from Swami Shraddhanand, *Inside Congress*, Bombay, 1946, pp. 60-1. Gandhi was anxious as ever before and after to avoid any real confrontation with the raj.

34 *CWG*, XV, 170.

35 Owen, op cit, 91 ; he refers to AICC minutes, 20-1 April 1919.

36 *CWG*, XV, 145 ; XVII, 185-6.

37 Ibid, XV, 213-4 ; see also 177-8, and 287 for his instructions to the citizens of Bombay after B. G. Horniman's deportation from India.

38 Ibid, 213.

39 Gandhi to Home Secretary Emerson, 20 March 1931, *CWG*, XLV, 316.

40 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 155.

41 Bamford, op cit, 11.

42 *CWG*, XVII, 257.

43 H. N. Brailsford, "Middle Years", in Polak, Brailsford and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 128.

44 *CWG*, XVII, 129, 201.

45 Ibid, 549.

46 K. L. Gillion, "Gujarat in 1919", in R. Kumar (ed.), op cit, 141 ; see also 139.

47 *CWG*, XVII, 549.

48 Ibid, 550.

49 Ibid, 159.

50 Ibid, XV, 230.

51 GOI, *India in 1919* ; quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 279.

52 Quoted in Owen, op cit, 66 from Indulal K. Yajnik, *Gandhi as I Knew him*, 97-8.

53 *CWG*, XV, 222.

54 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 356.

55 *CWG*, XV, 230.

56 Ibid, 219.

57 Ibid, 226.

58 Cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 179.

59 See p. 152 above.

60 *CWG*, XV, 243-4.

61 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 181.

62 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 357.

63 Ibid, 357-8.

64 *CWG*, XV, 334-5.

65 Ibid, 300.

66 Ibid, XIV, 373.

67 Ibid, XV, 345.

68 See Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 243-4.

69 See Tendulkar, op cit, I, 252. But no such telegrams or letters seeking the Viceroy's permission (or conveying the Viceroy's refusal to grant it) can be traced in *CWG*.

70 *CWG*, XV, 356.
71 Ibid, 391.
72 Ibid, 375.
73 Ibid, 362; XVI, 61-2.
74 Ibid, XV, 461.
75 Ibid, 367-8.
76 Ibid, 377: see also Gandhi's wire to Montagu, 24 June 1919, ibid, 387.
77 J. L. Maffey to Gandhi, 20 Apr. 1919, SN. No. 6551; cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 179.
78 *CWG*, XV, 302-3. In a Bengali book *Rus Biplab O Banglar Mukti Andolan* ('The Russian Revolution and the Freedom Movement in Bengal': Manisha Granthalay, Calcutta, 1967, p. 7), Gautam Chattopadhyay states that there was a burst of popular anger throughout India after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. He adds that Gandhi gave sharp expression to the nation's anti-imperialist urge for freedom, that in his words spoken in his characteristically mild manner was heard the clap of a thunder: "This Satanic government cannot be mended, it must be ended" (my translation from Bengali). Not only has this statement, rendered into Bengali, attributed to Gandhi and put within quotes but Chattopadhyay has cited as his source "*Young India* April 1919." All this seems queer. Such a statement by Gandhi is not found in *CWG*. Moreover, it is wholly contrary to the mahatma's deeds and writings of the time, to which we have referred briefly. I wrote to Chattopadhyay requesting him to enlighten me about the particular issue of *Young India* in which, according to his claim, this statement appeared. This journal was taken over and brought out as a bi-weekly by Gandhi from 7 May 1919 (see *CWG*, XV, 517). Unfortunately, I received no reply. I do not know whether my letter had reached him.
79 *CWG*, XV, 519.
80 Gandhi to Polak, 14 and 27 June; Gandhi to PSV, 18 and 28 June; Gandhi's wire to Montagu, 24 June; Gandhi to Jinnah, 28 June 1919: *CWG*, XV, 369, 396, 378, 397, 387, 398-9; see also 424.
81 Ibid, 425.
82 Cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 176.
83 *CWG*, XV, 469.
84 Ibid, XVI, 114, 117.
85 Satyagraha leaflet, No. 6, dt. 26 Apr. 1919, ibid, XV, 249.
86 Satyagraha leaflet, No. 14, dt. 4 May 1919, ibid, 269-70.
87 Ibid, 301.
88 Proclamation of an amnesty by the British King.
89 *CWG*, XVI, 360, 361; see also 363-4, 367.
90 Ibid, 366.
91 Tomlinson, "India and the British Empire", op cit, 358. The words quoted by him are from Lord Curzon's Memo on Indian Reforms, dt. 27.6.1917, CAB 24/17, GT 1199.
92 Tomlinson, ibid.

93 *CWG*, XVI, 366.
94 Ibid, 32-3, 39-40.
95 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 179-80, 181.
96 Page, *Prelude to Partition*, 148.
97 Sitaramayya, op cit, 180.
98 *CWG*, XVII, 368.
99 Ibid, 304.
100 Ibid, 417. In the same month (May 1920) Jawaharlal was writing to Sir Sita Ram: "I entirely agree with you in your suggestion that pamphlets should be issued in Hindi and Urdu to explain the Reforms Act,...and to point out how we can utilise it for approaching nearer to our ideals and aims." *SWN*, I, 150.
101 Bamford, op cit, 127.
102 Ibid, 149.
103 Ibid, 153.
104 Palme Dutt, op cit, 281.
105 Bamford, op cit, 15.
106 Cited in B. B. Misra, op cit, 179.
107 *CWG*, XX, 244.
108 Ibid, XXV, 424.
109 Ibid, XVII, 502, 503, 504 : see also 488.
110 Ibid, XVIII, 77.
111 Ibid, XVII, 415 ; see also 390.
112 Tendulkar, op cit, I, 293.
113 Ibid, II, 9.
114 *CWG*, XX, 493.
115 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 60.
116 *CWG*, XVII, 310.
117 Ibid, 369 ; also XX, 122, 408.
118 Ibid, XVII, 391 ; in this as well as in many other writings of his, Gandhi appears not as an Indian nationalist but as a leader of the Hindu community anxious to forge an 'alliance' with the Muslims.
119 Cited in Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 220 n.
120 *CWG*, XV, 264.
121 Ibid, XVII, 393 ; also 389.
122 Ibid, 478.
123 *CWG* XVIII, 78-9 ; see also 54, 98,
124 Ibid, 99.
125 Ibid, 88.
126 Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 253-4.
127 *CWG*, XVIII, 233-4.
128 Ibid, 282
129 Ibid, 190 ; see also 172-3, 214-5, 248-9, 262. Jawaharlal, too, opposed boycott of British goods "on the ground, inter-alia, that it was opposed to the basic principle of non-co-operation, that it was based on hate and not love and so on" (*CWG*, XXI, 595-6).

Original from

130 See Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, 18-9 ; R. J. F. Sullivan, *One Hundred Years of Bombay*, 208-9 ; A. D. D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, 61.

131 See Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 287-8, 298 ; see also 290, 292-3.

132 See A. K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India*, 250 (Table 7.11).

133 *CWG*, XV, 193.

134 Ibid, XXI, 240, 205, 290, 490, etc. For Rabindranath's criticism of this "magical formula" and of other magical revelations, see his "The Call of Truth," *Modern Review* (Calcutta), Oct. 1921, 431. See also the editorial note "On the 'Sinfulness' of Foreign Cloth," ibid, 514.

135 *CWG*, XVIII, 78.

136 Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, 77.

137 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 303.

138 *CWG*, XVI, 140-1, 159-5.

139 Ibid, XX, 61 ; see also 103 ; XIX, 423 ; XVII, 45-6.

140 Ibid, XVIII, 44-5.

141 R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 58-9.

142 *CWG*, XVII, 310.

143 Ibid, 462 ; see also 310.

144 R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 64-5.

145 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 36.

146 *CWG* XX, 371 ; XV, 193.

147 Ibid, XVIII, 101-2.

148 Ibid, XIX, 340.

149 Ibid, 366.

150 Ibid, XX, 233.

151 Bamford, op cit, 52-3.

152 Rabindranath, "The Call of Truth", op cit, 429.

153 *Young India*, 5 Jan. 1921, *CWG*, XX, 127.

154 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 79.

155 Ibid, 93.

156 Low, "The Government of India and the First Non-co-operation Movement—1920-1922", in R. Kumar (ed.) *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, 298.

157 See ibid, 301.

158 Ibid.

159 C. H. Philips (ed.), op cit. 218.

160 *CWG*. XVIII, 474, 478-9.

161 Ibid, XIX, 9-10.

162 Ibid, XX, 57, 140-2.

163 Ibid. XXI, 222.

164 Ibid, XIX, 580.

165 Ibid, XX, 134, 135.

166 Ibid. XX, 93, 536-8.

167 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 213-4.

168 J. Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 20.

168(a) *CWG*, XX, 403.

168(b) Ibid, 192.

169 See Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940*, 180.

170 A. K. Bagchi, op cit, 142, Table 5. 5.

171 Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 276-7.

172 Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, 317; cited in L.A. Gordon, op cit, 180.

173 *CWG*, XX, 182-3.

174 Ronaldshay to Montagu, 15 June 1921, quoted in Ray, op cit, 279; see also Bamford, op cit, 61.

175 Ray, op cit, 279.

176 *CWG*, XX, 226.

177 Ibid, 17.

178 Ibid, XXII, 478.

179 Ray, op cit, 291.

180 Krishnadas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, 239.

181 *CWG*, XXII, 117.

182 Sumit Sarkar, "The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy; Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-co-operation, c. 1905-22", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit, III, 298.

183 Ibid, 301.

184 See Swapan Dasgupta, "Adivasi Politics in Midnapur, c. 1760-1924", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit, IV, 124 ff.

185 Sumit Sarkar, "The Conditions and Nature", op cit, 300.

186 Quoted in ibid.

187 Ibid, 300-3; Ray, op cit, 299.

188 Ibid, 301.

189 *Young India*, 2 Feb. 1922, *CWG*, XXII, 313-4.

190 See Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", op cit; D. N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India 1920-1950*, Ch. V.

191 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 54.

192 Ibid, 61.

193 Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", op cit, 143, 152.

194 *CWG*, XX, 544.

195 Ibid, XIX, 362.

196 Ibid, 419-20; see also Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism", op cit, 159-61.

197 *CWG*, XX, 106.

198 S. Gopal, op cit, I, 61.

199 Quoted in ibid, 54-5.

200 Quoted in ibid, 55.

201 Ibid, 56.

202 *CWG*, XX, 18.

203 Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements*, 80-1.

204 Ibid, 81.

205 *CWG*, XXI, 48-9 ; see also 204.

206 *GOI*, *India in 1921-2* ; cited in R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 158.

207 Ibid.

208 *CWG*, XXI, 17, 18.

209 Bamford, op cit, 56.

210 *CWG*, XXII, 211-2 ; Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 281.

211 Ibid, 222.

212 Ibid, 226.

212a See p. 6 above.

212b Bamford, op cit, 56, 67 ; see also Sumit Sarkar, *A Critique of Colonial India*, 78-81.

212c Ramachandra Guha, "Forestry and Social Protest in British Kumaun, c. *1893-1921*", in R. Guha (ed.), op cit IV, 54-100. For the quotations, see p. 96.

212d Ibid, 87.

213 *CWG*, XIX, 495-6.

214 Bamford, op cit, 22.

215 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 215.

216 *CWG*, XXI, 69.

217 Held in July 1921. This conference resolved that "it is in every way religiously unlawful for a Mussulman at the present moment to continue in the British army or to induce others to join the army..." The Ali brothers and four other Muslim leaders were sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment each on the charge of passing this resolution. See R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 101.

218 The next Congress session was to meet at Ahmedabad at the end of the year.

219 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 79.

220 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 218.

221 *CWG*, XXI, 277.

222 Ibid, 265.

223 See Ray, op cit, 255.

224 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, 221.

225 Brailsford, op cit, 146.

226 *CWG*, XXI, 418.

227 Ibid, 456.

228 Ibid, 460.

229 Ibid, 466.

230 Quoted in R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 109-10.

231 See R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 110-3 ; Bamford, op cit, 43.

232 *CWG*, XXI, 558.

233 Ibid, 494, 456 ; XXII, 349.

234 Ibid, 89 ; also 56-8, 142.

235 Low, op cit, 309.

236 *CWG*, XXII, 45 ; see also Sapru to Vincent, 13 Dec. 1921, cited in Low, op cit, 311, fn. 3 ; *CWG* XXII, 58, 69.

237 Ibid, 87, 90.
238 Low, op cit, 311.
239 Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, I, 517 ; see also 508, 509.
240 *CWG*, XXII, 157, 158.
241 Ibid, 162.
242 Ibid, 187.
243 Ibid, 264.
244 Ibid, 289.
245 Ibid, 313-4.
246 Ibid, 143.
247 Ibid, 102.
248 Ibid, 98.
249 Ibid, 103.
250 Ibid, 96-7, 106-7.
251 Quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 286.
252 Ibid, 285.
253 *CWG*, XXI, 171 ; see also his interview to *Daily Express*, 15 Sept. 1921, Ibid, 108.
254 Bamford, op cit, 181.
255 *CWG*, XXII, 192-3.
256 Bamford, op cit, 69.
257 *CWG*, XXII, 110.
258 Ibid, 191.
259 Ibid, 149-50.
260 Ambalal Sarabhai to Thakurdas, 9 Jan. 1922, cited in David Page, op cit, 107-8.
261 *CWG*, XXII, 217.
262 Ibid, 282.
263 Ibid, 180.
264 Ibid, 274-5.
265 Low, op cit, 313.
266 *CWG*, XXII, 295-7.
267 Ibid, 291.
268 Ibid, 234.
269 Ibid, 285.
270 Ibid, 303-5 ; see also 327, 331.
271 Ibid, 515.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid, 425.
274 See Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy*, 224-6.
275 Ibid, 213-6 ; Mahadevprasad Saha's note in Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, 345 ; Manmathnath Gupta, *Gandhi and his Times*, 64, 69.
276 *CWG*, XXII, 351.
277 Lloyd's interview to Drew Pearson, Ibid, XXIII, 557.
278 Ibid, XXII, 673, 357n.
279 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 111.

280 *CWG*, XXII, 377-8.
281 Ibid, XIV, 380.
282 Ibid, XXII, 415-21, esp. 420.
283 Ibid, 397-8.
284 See pp. 195-6 above.
285 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 61.
286 See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, 255.
286a See *Documents*, II, 69 ; also 62-6.
287 *CWG*, XXIII, 28.
288 Ibid, XXII, 396, fn. 2.
289 Ibid, 400, fn. 1.
290 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 121.
291 *CWG*, XXII, 480, 501.
292 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 123.
293 *CWG*, XXII, 493.
294 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 85 ; see also *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, 220 for a similar observation by Nehru.
295 Gopal, op cit, 64.
296 Ray, op cit, 297, 304-5.
297 Ibid, 297.
298 See p. 232 above.
299 Bamford, op cit, 75.
300 Quoted in Palme Dutt, op cit, 288-9.
301 Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, 288, 289.
302 Lloyd's interview to Drew Pearson, *CWG*, XXIII, 557.
303 See p. 228 above.
304 See A. D. D. Gordon, op cit, esp. chaps. III and IV.
305 Ibid, 172.
306 Ibid, 156, 157, 159 ; See also A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics in a Developing Colonial Economy*, in C. Dewey and A. G. Hopkins (eds.), op cit, 208.
307 See Gitasree Bandyopadhyay, *Constraints in Bengal Politics 1921-1927*, Calcutta, 1984, 34 ; Ray, op cit, 302.
308 *CWG*, XXI, 62.
309 Gitasree Bandyopadhyay, op cit, 38 ; Ray, op cit, 297.
310 Sullivan, op cit, 208-9.
311 See p. 127 above.
312 *CWG*, XXII, 416.
313 Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, *Life and Myself*, I, Bombay, 1948, 101 ; quoted in Mahadevaprasad's note in Cecil Kaye, op cit, 245-6. Chattopadhyaya was a poet and brother of Sarojini Naidu.
314 H. N. Brailsford, *Subject India*, 26-7.
315 Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, 283.
316 Gandhi to Abdul Bari, M. Tricumji, R. Jhaveri, C. F. Andrews, *CWG*, XXIII, 92, 94, 95, 99.

317 P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, 190.

318 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy*, 56-7.

319 *CWG*, XVIII, 208 ; also 254 ; XVII, 460, 508 ; XX, 90.

320 Ibid, XXI, 249 ; also 75.

321 Ibid, 316.

322 Ibid, XXII, 491 ; also XX, 194.

323 Prison Papers 1920-1, JN Papers, quoted in B. N. Pandey, *Nehru*, 57-8.

324 *SWN*, I, 179.

325 B. N. Pandey, op cit, 58.

326 Bamford, op cit, 143.

327 Ibid, 146.

328 *CWG*, XXII, 462.

329 Ibid, XXI, 192.

330 Ibid, XXII, 202.

331 Ibid, XVIII, 283-90. Separate representation for the Muslims as a community on elected Congress committees and at conferences was actually provided for by the Congress leadership. It was not content merely with recognising the Muslims as a separate entity and providing separate electorates under the Lucknow pact. Meeting in mid-June 1921, with Gandhi in the chair, the Congress Working Committee resolved to advise all Provincial and other Congress Committees "to give full effect to the proportion fixed in the Lucknow *Compact* with reference to Mahomedan representation on the Legislative Councils" while "electing delegates to the Congress and provincial and other conferences and members to the All India Congress Committee and other Congress bodies..." (*The Encyclopaedia*, VIII, 414).

332 Ibid, XVIII, 254.

333 Ibid, XXI, 479.

334 Ibid, XXII, 506.

335 *CWG*, XXII, 350. A *shikha* is a tuft of hair on the head.

336 Ibid, XX, 190.

337 Ibid, 59 ; see also XXII, 496 ; XVII, 391.

338 *IAR*, 1920, Part III, 281-2.

339 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy*, 214-5, 216.

340 Manmathnath Gupta, op cit, 54, 59.

CHAPTER SIX

LOW DEPTHS OF NON-VIOLENT 'NATIONALISM' : 1922-1928

Congress Politics

Though the mahatma found 'perfect peace' and 'boundless happiness' within the walls of the prison, the conditions outside were far from cheerful. Despite the flare-up of some peasant struggles and the signs of the birth of new forces, it was, generally speaking, a political morass into which the people were led with the abrupt withdrawal of the movement. Non-co-operation with the government yielded to active war between two wings of the Congress leadership as well as to even more hot war between the two communities—Hindus and Muslims—mainly in North India. It was the eminent Congress leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai who led the Hindus in this holy war.

At the Gaya Congress, held at the end of 1922, C. R. Das, who presided, urged a change of policy. He proposed that the Congress should contest elections and enter Legislative Councils, not to accept office but to carry on there "uniform, continuous and consistent opposition to the Government." On the defeat of his proposal by a section of Congressmen led by Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, Das resigned presidentship of the Congress and formed the Swaraj Party together with Motilal Nehru. Loud and bitter were the squabbles between the two sections of the leadership.

It may be noted that a staunch non-co-operation-*wallah* like Rajendra Prasad did not boycott law courts during 1920-2[1], nor was he, though a member of the Working Committee, arrested (as many good Gandhians were not). He became a leading 'no-changer' and general secretary of the Congress while remaining immersed in lucrative legal practice. Like these eminent leaders, Gandhi, too, after release from prison in early February 1924, wanted to keep up the pretence of non-co-operation.

The Swaraj Party contested the elections in 1923 and fared rather well. In the Central Legislative Assembly it won a number of seats. In the Central Provinces it obtained a majority of seats, made ministry-making impossible and forced the suspension of the Constitution. In Bengal the Swarajists, though not forming a majority by themselves could mobilize the support of several other elected members and inflicted many defeats on the government in the legislative council.

In Bengal Das entered into a pact with the Muslim leaders, known as the Bengal Pact ; the main terms were that representation in the Bengal Legislative Council should be on the population basis through separate electorates for the Muslims, that 55 per cent of the goverment jobs should go to Muslim candidates, that Hindus should not play music before mosques, and that there should be no interference with cow-killing for religious sacrifice but that it should be done in such a manner that the religious feelings of the Hindus were not hurt.[2] The pact won for the Swaraj Party nineteen out of thirty-nine Muslim seats. The Cocanada session of the Congress, held at the end of 1923, refused to endorse the pact.

So long as Das was alive the pact was honoured. But after his death, despite the opposition of Birendranath Sasmal and others, J. M. Sengupta and other leaders and the 'Karmi Sangha' (an organization of Congress workers), "encouraged by Malaviya and G. D. Birla,"[3] repudiated the agreement, and the Swaraj Party and the Congress "not only took on a more Hindu but also a more aristocratic, high caste, zamindari colouring in Bengal."[4]

Not a single term of the pact touched the economic problems in the lives of the basic masses : it was somewhat concerned with the economic and political interests of members of the upper classes and the petty bourgeoisie. But its un-Malaviya-like, un-Gandhi-like solution of the cow and music-before-mosque problems, which were utilized by the Malaviyas and their Muslim counterparts to whip up fanatical passions of unsophisticated people in this semi-feudal sub-continent, was a distinct advantage. The pact helped to curb during Das's time the growth in Bengal of communalism, the waves of which engulfed Northern India.

Released from prison, Gandhi wrote to Mahomed Ali, the Congress president, that "*we need never resort to civil disobedience*", if his programme – the promotion of "unity between *the races*," plying of the *charkha*, removal of untouchability and "the application of non-violence in thought, word and deed to our methods"—was carried out.[5]

Gandhi gave notice of four resolutions he wanted to move at the AICC meeting at the end of June 1924. He demanded unquestioning obedience to him. He wrote : "I must have soldiers who would obey and who have faith in themselves and in their general and who will willingly carry out instructions."[5a] And his dictatorial role always appeared decked out in an ideological garb.

At the AICC meeting Gandhi moved a resolution requiring every Congress member to spin regularly for at least half an hour or lose his office. Though challenged by the Swarajists as unconstitutional, it was passed, but the penal clause was dropped. It is interesting that a joint statement issued by Gandhi, Das and Nehru early in November permitted a member to spin "*by deputy*" in case of unwillingness.

At the June AICC meeting, the mahatma moved another resolution condemning the action of the young revolutionary—Gopinath Saha – who had assassinated a European mistaking him for Calcutta's notorious police commissioner Tegart, and had been hanged.[6] C. R. Das moved an amendment which, while condemning violence, paid a tribute to Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice. The amendment was lost by only eight votes – "a staggering revelation" for the mahatma.[7]

In his draft statement on council-entry Gandhi asserted that the Swarajist programme of obstruction in the legislatures had "a strong smell of violence about it." His "*fundamental* objection" to the programme was that council-entry was "tantamount to participation in violence."[8] In a lengthy rejoinder, Motilal stated that when Gandhi consented to Congressmen taking part in municipal councils which were "a most essential part of the administration" and which could "only be carried on by complete co-operation with the Government," he could hardly object to council-entry on the plea that it was participation "in the present system of government."[9]

When Gandhi failed to browbeat the Swarajists, he dropped his "fundamental objection" on the ground of violence, while cherishing "an honest and *fundamental* difference."[10] In early November 1924 he ignored the "fundamental difference" and issued a joint statement with Chittaranjan and Motilal, which stated that the Swaraj Party should carry on "on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress organization the work in connection with the Central and Provincial Legislatures", while the promotion of *Khadi*, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability should be carried on by all sections of the Congress.

The agreement between Gandhi and the Swarajists was endorsed by the Belgaum Congress held at the end of 1924 under the presidentship of Gandhi. In fact, there was little fundamental difference between the two wings of the Congress leadership or between either of it and the fence-sitters like Jawaharlal. Staunch 'non-co-operators' were co-operating with the government and 'co-operators' were non-co-operating in the legislatures. But the latter were not averse to co-operation with the colonial masters. On entering the Central Legislative Assembly as the leader of the Swaraj Assembly Party, Motilal declared "that his party could not be dismissed as wreckers. *His party had come there to offer their co-operation*. If the Government would receive their co-operation, they would find that *the Swarajists were their men*."[11]

Soon the lure of office proved too strong for many Swarajists and they forsook the path of opposition to the Government. In the Central Provinces, where the Swarajists were in the majority, one of them became a minister. Though this action was resented by Motilal, it was openly defended by other prominent Swarajists of Bombay and the Central Provinces, who split from the Swaraj Party and formed the Responsivist Party to offer "responsive co-operation" to the government. Though Motilal took a 'holier-than-thou' attitude, he himself was offering co-operation to the government which it sought.[12]

Both Das and the Pandit were hopeful of a settlement with the raj. Their hopes were pinned on the Labour government in Britain, from which they expected a summons to a conference.[13] Though the Viceroy issued in October 1924 an emergency ordinance, known as the Bengal Ordinance, and in a sudden swoop, a number of leading Congressmen of Bengal, including Subhas Bose, were arrested and detained without trial, Das saw signs of a change of heart of the British government. In May 1925, about a month before his death, Das declared at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Faridpur: "Provided some real responsibility is transferred to the people, there is no reason why we should not co-operate with the Government." At the time Das was engaged in negotiating with the government.[14]

Das's Faridpur proposal received support from Gandhi, who attended the conference.[15] In an obvious appeal to the raj, immediately after Das's death in June 1925, Gandhi said that Das's "Faridpur speech had a great purpose behind it" and added: "Can this glorious death be utilized to heal wounds and forget distrust? .. May the fire that burnt yesterday the perishable part of Deshbandhu also burn the perishable distrust, suspicion and fear."[16] Indeed, it was only "perishable distrust, suspicion and fear" that divided the Gandhis from the British imperialists.

All this time Gandhi was busy organizing his forces. He had revived his journals—*Young India* (English) and *Navajivan* (Gujarati)—and his close associates Jamnalal Bajaj, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari had founded the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1923 with Bajaj as president. The All India Khaddar Board had also been set up in 1923; it also had as its chairman Jamnalal Bajaj. In 1925, during Gandhi's presidentship of the Congress, the AICC formed the All-India Spinners' Association but as a separate and autonomous organization. All these and similar organizations set up later, for instance, the Go-Seva Sangh (Cow Protection Society), Hindustani Talimi Sangh, All-India Village Industries Association, Harijan Sevak Sangh, each of which had a network of centres, functioned independently of the Congress and were under the direct control of Gandhi; their office-bearers were not elected but nominated by him. A string of such organizations with bands of wholetime workers loyal to Gandhi alone and engaged in activities dear to his heart were run with the help of ample funds placed at his disposal by the big bourgeois not particularly noted for honesty or idealism. It was the millions of rupees donated by them that gave the initial start to Gandhi's papers, maintained his *ashram* (which was itself an important organization) and the different institutions with their sub-continental networks, staffed by wholetime workers—a formidable apparatus under the *sole* control of the mahatma, in whom those who controlled the purse had complete faith (until at least the mid-forties). "If you will be soldiers in my army", he said to the workers of these organizations, "understand that there is no room for democracy in that organization.....In an army the General's word is law, and his conditions cannot be relaxed."[17]

For some time Gandhi had been entreating the 'liberals', also known as 'moderates', who, as Jawaharlal said, "had close relations with the British Government and the big landlord class",[18] to join the Congress. In his presidential address to the Belgaum Congress at the end of 1924, Gandhi gave a call for unity of Swarajists, No-Changers, Moderates, Muslim Leaguers and so on. In fact, Gandhi and his associates were wooing even representatives of British expatriate capital in India.[19]

Presiding over the Belgaum Congress, Gandhi declared : "I would therefore strive for Swaraj within the Empire....Any scheme that I would frame, while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the Empire, would be that of alliance and not of independence without alliance." He urged "every Congressman not to be insistent on independence..."[20] The response of the raj to such schemes or appeals for burying 'the perishable distrust, suspicion and fear' was only scornful. "I am not able", Secretary of State Birkenhead told the House of Lords in July 1925, "in any foreseeable future, to discern a moment when we may safely, either to ourselves or India, abandon our trust."[21]

A Hindu atmosphere surrounded the Belgaum Congress. To quote from *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, "The pictures of Vidyaranya and his disciples along with those of the deities of Shiva, Vishnu and Lakshmi...adorned the front of the *Mandap* [in the Congress pavilion]. Below them was hung a picture of the Karnatak coat of arms with Nandi in the centre and two elephants with their trunks raised on either side.. Among other portraits were those of the Maharaja of Mysore and many leaders past and present."[22]

Despite its claim to represent Indian nationalism, it was usual for the Congress to breathe a Hindu atmosphere. Rajendra Prasad writes that on the occasion of the Bombay Congress in 1934, over which he presided, "Throughout the route [of the presidential procession] we were welcomed with flowers and devotional music."[23]

The Communal Ladder to Swaraj

The "unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Muslims" soon yielded to mutual distrust and strife. Serious communal riots broke out in North India and their contagion was carried by leaders and persons involved in them to places like Calcutta.

Swami Shraddhanand started in 1923 a movement called *shuddhi* for re-conversion of Hindus who had been converted to Islam. Both the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha took up the tasks of aggressive proselytizing and protection of the cow. It was under the presidency of Malaviya that the Hindu Mahasabha adopted the *shuddhi* programme. The *shuddhi* and *sangathan* (organization) movements were sought to be countered by *tabligh* and *tanzim* movements of the Muslims. As Bamford wrote, these movements were confined mainly to Northern India[24]—U. P. and Punjab. In a letter to Gandhi, G. D. Birla extolled the virtues of forcible proselytizing. Lajpat Rai pinned his hopes on Birla as the leader of the Hindus in North India.[25]

Besides *shuddhi* and *sangathan*, and *tabligh* and *tanzim*, there were the traditional issues—cow-slaughter and music before mosques —to be utilized by the vested interests of both the communities to inflame the communal passions of unsophisticated people. The refusal of Malaviya and other Hindu leaders to come to a fair arrangement on these issues led to the worsening of relations between the two communities and to the spread of riots.[26]

The growth of communalism was no spontaneous phenomenon. When separate electorates existed, eminent Hindu and Muslim leaders, including Congress ones, raised the communal war-cry to gain electoral advantages and defeat their rivals. Violent Hindu communal propaganda served as an electoral weapon in the hands of Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and their men in their battle against the Swaraj Party dominated by Motilal.[27]

On Gandhi's initiative, the transfer of organizational leadership of the Congress to the Swarajists was completed at the AICC meeting held at Patna in September 1925. The Swarajists were given full freedom to carry on with their parliamentary programme in the name of the Congress. Gandhi discreetly withdrew from the rough-and-tumble of active politics when the Congress was riven by factions and communalism was rife. He preferred to devote himself to the cause of the spinning-wheel. But, whenever in difficulty, Motilal, though behaving like a dictator, appealed to him for help, and no important step was taken without Sabarmati's approval.

It was the political rivalry between Motilal who dominated the Swaraj Party and Malaviya and Lajpat Rai who broke away from the Congress and formed the Independent Congress Party to contest the elections to the Central and provincial legislatures, that was responsible to a great extent for the communal tension in U. P. and Punjab. "It was simply beyond me," wrote Motilal to his son, "to meet the kind of propaganda started against me under the auspices of the Malaviya-Lala gang. Publicly I was denounced as an anti-Hindu and pro-Mohammedan but privately almost every individual voter was told that I was a beef-eater in league with the Mohammedans to legalize cow slaughter in public places at all times.....Communal hatred and heavy bribing of the voters was the order of the day.....The Malaviya-Lala gang aided by Birla's money are making frantic efforts to capture the Congress."[28]

Motilal and his colleagues themselves were far from clean. They too adopted a Hindu communalist position and wooed the Hindu Mahasabha. Before the elections in 1926, the Swaraj Party became "as good a Hindu body as one could want" and Motilal himself, commented Viceroy Irwin, became "a true Hindu."[29]

The election results were hardly flattering to the Swaraj Party. All its candidates to the Central Assembly from the U. P., except Motilal who was not opposed, were defeated. In Bengal there were sixteen Muslim Swarajists in 1923 ; in 1926 there were none.

It is true that Gandhi had always the slogan of 'Hindu-Muslim unity' on his lips and went on a fast for 21 days in September 1924 in Mohamed Ali's house in Delhi to stop Hindu-Muslim riots, but his words and actions contributed to the growing estrangement between the two communities instead of bringing them nearer. During his fast he said to some Muslim friends: "For the Hindus cow-protection and the playing of music even near the mosque was the substance of Hinduism, and for the Mussalmans cow-killing and prohibition of music was the substance of Islam."[30]

During these days the mahatma was constantly calling Hindus "cowards" and Muslims "bullies."[31] He was asking the Hindu to cast off fear before the Muslim "bully" and "cultivate either of these two—faith in God or faith in one's physical might. If he does neither, it will spell the ruin of the community."[32]

It is euphemistic to say, as Sumit Sarkar does,[33] that Gandhi never broke with Malaviya, the high priest of Hindu communalism. In fact, at this time when Muslims were complaining against Malaviya and Lajpat Rai for spreading the communal poison, Gandhi came out in defence of them. Ignoring facts, he said that both of them were tried servants of the country, free from anti-Muslim bias, and that "to question the good faith of these leaders is to doubt the possibility of unity." He eulogised Malaviya as "Bharat Bhusan," "the jewel of India" and so on.[34] Lajpat Rai and Motilal, wrote Gandhi, "are both lovers of the country. Lalaji sees no escape from communalism. Panditji cannot brook even the thought of it. Who shall say that only one is right?...He [Lajpat Rai] proposes to mount to it [*swaraj*] through communalism..."[35] The mahatma seemed inclined to believe that communalism could serve as the ladder to *swaraj*.

In a letter to G. D. Birla, Gandhi wrote: "...I was not perturbed by the Calcutta riots. I have already said that if the Hindus are bent upon fighting, then instead of finding fault with it as a symptom of cruelty, *we should treat it as a virtue and augment it*."[36] "If some Hindu," wrote Gandhi again, "disfavours the path of peace or is not equipped for it, he should acquire the strength necessary for an open clash."[37]

The bond between the mahatma and the maulanas—the Ali brothers—could not survive the Hindu-Muslim riots. Gandhi and Shaukat Ali, who went to Rawalpindi to investigate a serious riot that had taken place in Kohat in the North-West Frontier Province in September 1924, failed to agree about the causes of the riot and responsibilities of the two communities and issued separate statements. When these two apostles of Hindu-Muslim unity could not themselves unite at a critical moment, the mahatma's endless sermons could hardly produce the desired result. Rather, their roles actually disrupted communal unity instead of cementing it.

During these days of communal strife, when the foremost task of an Indian nationalist leader was how to end it and build up unity, Gandhi dropped promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity out of his 'constructive programme' which ostensibly had three main planks—promotion of *Khaddar*, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability. In an interview to the press on 5 March 1925, he said :

"The Hindu-Muslim problem is therefore just now an insoluble puzzle. I propose to keep out of it, holding myself available whenever wanted."[38]

The *acharyya* of the science of non-violence seemed to concede that his non-violence failed to work so far as Hindu-Muslim relations were concerned. He even discovered virtues in the mutual killing of Hindus and Muslims. "*Hindu-Muslim quarrels*," he wrote, "*are, in a way unknown to us, a fight for* swaraj....This fighting [which most often took the form of cowardly assaults on defenceless men, women and children], however unfortunate it may be, is *a sign of growth*. It is like the War of the Roses. *Out of it will rise a mighty nation.*"[39] To the mahatma, the inter-communal violence—not militant anti-imperialist struggle—was a welcome means of forging a mighty nation !

An important project Gandhi planned at this time had for its object the consolidation of 'Hindu India.' In *Young India* of 14 July 1927, he proposed an 'All-India script.' He wrote that "before the acceptance of Devanagari script becomes *a universal fact* in India, *Hindu India has got to be converted to the idea of one script for all the languages derived from Sanskrit and Dravidian stock*....If these scripts [Bengali, Sindhi, Gurumukhi, Oriya Malayalam, Kanarese, Tamil, Telugu and so on] could be replaced by Devanagari for all practical and national purposes, it would mean a tremendous step forward. *It will help to solidify Hindu India.*"[40] If implemented, Gandhi's proposal would split every nation of India on the basis of script.

The All-India Cow Protection Conference was held with Gandhi as president at the time of the Belgaum Congress. He became president of the All-India Cow Protection Sabha and drafted its constitution. As president of the conference, he declared :

"I hold the question of *cow-protection* to be not less momentous but *in certain respects even of far greater moment than that of swaraj.*"

Earlier, in April 1924, he had said : "The issue of cow-protection is intimately connected with the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity."

"The whole of India," the mahatma said, "is aware that the protection of cows is one of the vital reasons for the friendship that I deliberately wish to cultivate with the Muslims."[41]

Gandhi wanted that the Muslims should give up cow-slaughter either for food or for religious sacrifice. Referring to the resolutions adopted at the Madras Congress at the end of 1927, including the one on independence, he said : "So far as the vast mass of Hindus are concerned, they are interested only in the cow and music resolution.... It is nothing short of complete voluntary stoppage of cow-slaughter by Mussalmans whether for sacrifice or for food [that would spare the Hindus' feeling in the matter of the cow]."[42]

At the same time the mahatma was eloquent on the virtues of *varnashrama dharma*. He called it the 'recognition of a scientific fact,' 'a healthy division of work based on birth,' 'a very beautiful and beneficial thing and never a bad one,' 'a unique contribution of Hinduism to the world,' and so on. He explained that "*Varna* is the recognition of a definite law that governs human happiness. And it simply means that we must treasure and conserve all the good qualities that we inherit from our ancestors, and that therefore each one should follow the profession of his father so long as the profession is not immoral."[43]

The mahatma wanted the 'untouchables' (the 'dalits') to be regarded not as 'atisudras' but as 'sudras'—members of the fourth caste. He told the 'untouchables' whose task was to cleanse lavatories that theirs was "a holy profession" which they should pursue with a sense of the dignity of their labour. How could they remove their disabilities ? "The only pure way", he said, "is that of self-purification"—not use of physical force, nor a renunciation of Hinduism, nor non-co-operation with the caste Hindus. Only by ridding themselves of the vices like drinking and eating meat, they would be able to overcome the prejudices of the orthodox Hindus and their uplift would be possible.[44]

Sinking deeper into the Trough

The wooing of the raj and piteous appeals to it formed one aspect of Gandhi's politics ; the 'constructive programme' was the other aspect. This programme hardly made any progress. One of its three main items—the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity—fell by the wayside, and the *khadi* part of the programme had little appeal even to Congressmen. As a result of his imposition of the *khadi* 'franchise' and despite the fact that a member of the Congress could *spin by deputy* and despite the very liberal finances provided by big bourgeois patrons to his spinning organizations, the membership of the Congress fell alarmingly. In his home province, Gujarat, the total number of Congress members at the end of August 1925 was only 2,580, of whom 580 were entitled to vote at the next AICC elections. "The detailed study", wrote Gandhi, "shows that even the five hundred and forty members...are drawn from the five spinning organizations, for want of which there would not be even five hundred forty members remaining."[45] This was where the mahatma's panacea for all the ills of the sub-continent had landed the Congress.

The pressure of the non-co-operation movement did not lead to any compromise with the British raj, as Bipan Chandra's theory of the 'P C-P' strategy claims. Actually, all the prayers of the Congress leadership for negotiations and crumbs of concessions were rudely rebuffed. The Congress, a divided house split into no-changers, pro-changers, responsivists, with whom the Malaviya-Lajpat Rai faction teamed up, seemed to have entered a political wilderness. "We suffered a setback after the non-co-operation movement", wrote Jawaharlal in September 1927, "and the reaction grows and we sink deeper and deeper into the trough."[46]

When non-violent 'nationalism' gave rise to violent communal forces and the Congress was riven by factions, the outstanding leader of the Congress, Pandit Motilal, found the lure of lucre and charms of Europe more powerful than the attractions of politics in India. He left India in 1927 for London to represent a wealthy zamindar client at the Privy Council for a considerable remuneration, then travelled for some months with his son and some other family members in several countries of Europe, "took the most expensive suites in the best hotels", stayed on in Europe after they had left in December, visited casinos, played, won and lost. Another great leader, Vithalbhai Patel, was received by the King and had interviews with important British ministers, and the reports of Patel's exploits were received by the Pandit with a tinge of envy.[47]

The shameless pandering by leaders to the religious prejudices of unsophisticated people to serve personal or group interests, the consequent spread of communal riots, the growing alienation of the Congress from the Muslims, the unscrupulous factional fights between leaders of the Congress, the haughty, scornful rebuffs by the raj and so on were inseparably associated with non-violent 'nationalism'.

A Shot in the Arm

Congress politics received a shot in the arm when, in November 1927, the British government announced the formation of the Indian Statutory Commission with Lord Simon as its Chairman and Clement Attlee, the future Prime Minister of Britain, as one of its members. The Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission, was appointed to review and recommend measures for India's 'constitutional advance'. The composition of the Commission, an all-white one, was resented by various shades of Indian political opinion—Congress, 'Liberal', a faction of the Muslim League led by Jinnah and so on. In a manifesto, the Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP), which was a frontal organization of the communists, condemned the policies of the political parties which merely quibbled over the personnel of the Commission. It challenged the very right of British imperialism to decide the political destiny of India and upheld the principle of self-determination—"the inherent right of every nation."[48] The Madras Congress "refused to endorse their [the communist delegates', call for protest strikes and hartals...against the projected visit of the Simon Commission".[48a]

The call for the boycott of the Simon Commission went out. On 3 February 1928, the day of the arrival of of the Simon Commission at Bombay, protest hartals, demonstrations and meetings were held in all the principal cities and towns of India. In Bombay and Calcutta workers, youth and students under the leadership of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties played a leading role. They raised the slogans "Down with Imperialism and Simon Commission !", "Long live Revolution !", "Complete Independence !", "Land to the Peasants" and so on. A hartal and massive demonstration by two lakh people, organized jointly by the Bengal PCC under the leadership of Subhas Bose and the WPP Bengal, greeted the Commission on its arrival in Calcutta in the middle of January 1929.[49] While leading protest demonstrations in Lahore and Lucknow, Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal were assaulted by policemen. When, a few days after the assault, Lajpat Rai died, presumably from the after-effects of the lathi blows he had received, a feeling of indignation swept through India.

Earlier, the Madras session of the Congress, held at the end of 1927, adopted a vague resolution declaring independence as its future goal. Jawaharlal, who moved the resolution, had been in Europe for about two years and represented the Congress at the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, held at Brussels in February 1927.

In a letter of 4 January 1928, Gandhi warned the younger Nehru that he was "going too fast."[50] Gandhi openly chided the members for their irresponsibility and indiscipline in passing the resolutions on independence and boycott of British goods. The independence resolution was described by him as a "tragedy."[51]

Jawaharlal resented Gandhi's remarks and, in a letter to him, claimed that he enjoyed considerable support, criticized Gandhi's leadership as hesitant and ineffective, and contended that their ideas and ideals were different.[52] In reply, Gandhi dared him to unfurl his banner of revolt and "carry on open warfare against me and my views" as the differences seemed "so vast and radical that there seems no meeting ground between us", and proposed to publish his manifesto or letter together with his reply.[53] *It was the moment of Jawaharlal Nehru's discovery of himself.* Always "a worshipper of success" (as Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal's colleague for many years, called him[53a]), the younger Nehru felt discretion to be preferable to devotion to a cause and assured Gandhi that he had "no particular banner to unfurl" : "...am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child ?"—he asked. He added that "for the present at least you might not publish my letter."[54] Jawaharlal never forgot the lesson he learnt then. Afterwards Gandhi could repose in him implicit trust and was ever ready to disarm suspicions which Jawaharlal's radical stance might awaken.[55] As we shall see, the errant child's radical stance proved quite useful to the mahatma.

'The Delhi Proposals' and the Nehru Committee

On 20 March 1927 a very significant move was made by Muslim leaders meeting under the presidency of Jinnah in Delhi. They made the unanimous offer to give up separate electorates in favour of joint electorates, if the following conditions were agreed to. First, Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency and made into a separate province ; second, the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan should be treated on the same footing as other provinces ; third, the proportion of representation of the Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal should be on the basis of population ; and fourth, Muslim representation in the central legislature should not be less than one-third.

The Muslim leaders' proposals enjoyed the support of Muslims in different provinces, except of a Muslim League faction in the Punjab led by Sir Muhammad Shafi. These proposals were endorsed by the annual Muslim League session held at the end of 1927. They offered the Congress leaders, who claimed to be nationalists, an opportunity to do away with separate electorates which stood in the way of national integration. When Gandhi's 'creed' prevented the Congress from uniting the people of the different communities at the barricade—rather, it disrupted any attempt of the people to do so—and when the solution depended on negotiations between the elite leaders of the two communities, the proposals indeed offered a reasonable solution. Previously, in 1916, the Congress leaders had agreed to separate electorates when they hammered out the Lucknow Pact with the Muslim League leaders at the Nehrus' Anand Bhavan at Allahabad. The Congress leaders had then conceded one-third representation in the central legislatures to the Muslims. The Congress-League joint address to the Secretary of State and Viceroy in October 1917 prayed to them to implement the Congress-League agreement (Gandhi's "*Swaraj* scheme"), and the Congress-League proposals about communal representation were adopted by the raj in the Government of India Act of 1919. The mischief caused by the Government of India Act of 1909 was compounded by the Congress policy. The Muslim leaders' proposals of 1927, if agreed to, would have helped in undoing the mischief to an extent possible under the circumstances. The statutory majority of Muslims in the Bengal and Punjab legislatures, elected by the joint votes of Muslims, Hindus and others, was under the circumstances a much lesser evil than any solution that the raj could and did impose. The demands that Sind should be constituted into a separate province and that NWFP and Baluchistan should have legislative councils instead of remaining Chief Commissioner's provinces, could be (and were) opposed only in the interests of Hindu usurers and traders. If accepted, the Muslim leaders' proposals would have dispelled to some extent the miasma of communalism, which constitutional politics, to which the Congress leadership was wedded, gave rise to.

At first the Congress Working Committee welcomed the proposals and, in May 1927, the AICC unanimously accepted them. The Madras session of the Congress endorsed them. But, at the end, Hindu chauvinism triumphed.

Convened by the Congress in accordance with the Madras Congress resolution,[56] an All Parties Conference met first in February and then in March 1928 with the purpose of drawing up a '*Swaraj* constitution'. The Muslim leaders' proposals were all opposed by the Hindu Mahasabha leaders who were also eminent Congress leaders.[57] On 3 March Gandhi wrote to Motilal that "unless the Mussalmans agree, there is no going back by us on reservation of seats. The Congress is committed to it. I think, therefore, that we must simply adhere to the Congress resolution."[58] Muslim Congress leaders like Shuaib Qureshi, then one of the general secretaries of the Congress, also insisted that the Congress resolution passed at Madras should be adhered to. But Hindu Congress leaders such as the Nehrus, both father and son, refused to stand by it and yielded more and more to the Hindu Mahasabha. And soon after Gandhi staged a *volte face*.

On 17 March Jinnah and the Muslim League withdrew from the Conference and Jinnah soon left for England. When the Conference again met in May, it appointed a small committee[59] with Motilal as chairman to draft a report. Though not a member, Jawaharlal acted as its secretary and was a co-author of the report.

Shaukat Ali complained to Gandhi several times but to no effect. In July he wrote: "Apparently there is no change in the attitude of Panditji [Motilal] and he wants the Madras Resolution to go and the Mussalmans to give up the Reservation of Seats and the Separation of Sind also....I am afraid, if Panditji insists on adopting the Mahasabha formulas, then the position of Moslem Congressmen would be most unpleasant."[60] The mahatma refused to argue with him and carefully avoided any steps that might lead to some understanding with the Muslim leaders who wielded great influence on their community and whom he had accepted only a few years before as the leaders of their community. He had only homilies to offer in answer to the earnest appeals of Shaukat Ali, who warned him: "We cannot allow things to drift because that way lies danger and that terribly ugly thing called civil war which means a brother killing a brother. I must stop it in my own way and I beg you to do the same in your way."[61]

Gandhi remained unperturbed. He encouraged Motilal and showered praises on him and his committee "for the very able and practically *unanimous* report..." The report as it emerged at the end of August 1928 was hailed by Gandhi as "the people's victory."[62] When the mahatma was speaking of the "unanimous report", he knew quite well that it was driving a wedge between the two major communities. The Muslim League had refused to participate in the work of the conference ; Shaukat Ali, secretary of the Central Khilafat Committee, was strongly condemning the report ;[63] Shuaib Qureshi, a member of the Nehru Committee and one of the Congress general secretaries, complained that the original agreement had been altered, and considered himself the victim of a political manoeuvre ;[64] and Jinnah, who had initiated the proposals for joint electorates, refused to have any truck with the committtee or its report. Gandhi praised Ansari for using his influence to disarm the opposition of the Muslim leaders when it was actually growing. A little later, the mahatma himself was writing to Motilal : "I see you are having no end of difficulties with Mussalman friends regarding your report "[65]

Jawaharlal helped Motilal not in "unravelling the tangle" but in making it more knotted.[66] The younger Nehru claimed that the report offered "a fair solution, just to all parties", that the All Parties Conference at Lucknow "has given the finishing kick to communalism," that he was 'prepared to pay a large price" for the solution of the communal problem the report provided."[67]

The report recommended joint electorates while rejecting the Muslim leaders' conditions. It did not provide for Muslim representation in Bengal and the Punjab on the basis of population ; contrary to what the Lucknow Pact had conceded, it refused to recommend reservation of one third of seats in the central legislature for Muslims ; it recommended that Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency only when the Nehru Constitution would come into effect.[68] By upholding the Nehru Report, the Congress leaders including Gandhi repudiated their earlier commitments.

Interestingly, Motilal entered into a deal with Lajpat Rai, whose rabid Hindu communalism had routed Motilal's Swaraj Party in the Punjab and U.P. in 1926. As Motilal explained to Gandhi, it was arranged that "Hindu opposition to the Mussalman demands should continue and even stiffen up to the time the [All India] Convention was held. The object was to reduce the Muhammadan demands to an irreducible minimum", and then the Lala would appear at the

Convention to accept it on behalf of the Hindus True to this secret understanding Lajpat Rai, while presiding at the Hindu Mahasabha session at Etawah, opposed every demand of the Muslim League. But he did not live to accept at the Convention the 'irreducible minimum' demand of the Muslims. Instead, his militant "speech was widely circulated at the Convention as his last will and testament and stiffened the Hindu attitude" towards even the most modest Muslim demands[69] These eminent leaders, who claimed to represent the 'Indian nation', relied not on statesmanship, not on the sense of justice and fair play, not even on past commitments, but on tricks to solve a problem that intimately affected the lives of four hundred million people and of unborn generations in this sub-continent.

The nationalist pretensions of many eminent Congress leaders were exposed during these days when their loud protestations were tested by the touchstone of practice. As B. N. Pandey writes, "Even Motilal himself was not agreeable to the extension of constitutional reforms in Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province..."[70] As leader of the Swaraj Party, Motilal did not allow Syed Murtuza, a Swarajist from Madras, to move a resolution in the Central Assembly in February 1926, seeking the establishment of a legislative council in this Chief Commissioner's province, the same as other provinces had.[71] On such issues including the separation of Sind from the artificially constituted multi-lingual Bombay Presidency, the Nehrus, Malaviya and Lajpat Rai sailed in the same boat. *It was not the purity of nationalist politics but the security of the trading and moneylending Hindu interests that they all wanted to safeguard.* The second partition of Bengal, the tragedy that split the Bengali nation and weakened the progressive forces in Bengal, was also caused by the same solicitude for the Marwari comprador interests. We shall return to that later.

The heady wine of professional success of these men, whether as lawyers or as politicians, made them insufferably vain and arrogant. "I like your way of putting it," Motilal wrote to Thakurdas, "when you say that it is disconcerting to find that I have differed from men like Ansari and Shuaib Qureshi, instead of saying that it is unfortunate that Dr Ansari and Shuaib Qureshi should differ from a man like me. How could they dare?"[72] The same insolence marked his letter of 30 September 1928 to Annie Besant: "All that will then [after the Punjab and Bengal questions are disposed of] remain to settle the Hindu-Muslim question in the rest of India will I expect be easily settled by throwing a few crumbs here and there to the small [Muslim] minorities."[73] This was the great Congress leader's way of dealing with a momentous problem while mouthing the slogan of 'Hindu-Muslim unity'. While drafting an outline of a constitution for future India, which was meant for the consideration of the raj, he thought of himself as the dispenser of power and arbiter of the destiny of the Indian people. In his letter of 23 October 1928 to Gandhi, Shaukat Ali wrote: "I had real quarrel with Panditji [Motilal] at Ambalal Sarabhai's and very nearly came to blows, as my blood boiled when in our face he was heaping abuses on us 'No-changers';....My quarrel really is not with Ansari but with Pandit Motilal, who knowing that I was giving expression to the views of millions of Mussalmans, yet would not listen."[74]

After the Nehru Committee Report had been finalized, the Nehrus, both father and son, tried to circulate it among the Muslims with vast sums of money donated by G. D. Birla and the like.[75] Motilal wrote to Annie Besant on 30 September 1928 that "nothing less than a lakh of rupees would be required to carry on an intensive propaganda in all provinces during the next three months. The greater part of this money is expected to come from Bombay and Calcutta and I have to visit both these places in the near future."[76]

An 'All Parties National Convention' was held in Calcutta from 22 December 1928 to 1 January 1929. Muslim League delegates placed before the Convention the following proposals:

1. One third of the elected representatives of both houses of the Central Legislature should be Muslims;
2. The separation of Sind should not wait till 'the establishment of government under this [Nehru] Constitution';
3. The residuary powers should vest in the provinces; and
4. The contingency of adult suffrage not being introduced should be taken into consideration.[77]

Speaking in favour of the Muslim League proposals, Jinnah said :

"...in the event of adult suffrage not being established, Punjab and Bengal also should have seats reserved on the population basis for the Mussalmans... Our next proposal is that *the form of the constitution should be federal with residuary power vesting in the Provinces and Clause 13(a) in the Supplementary Nehru Report*[78] [empowering the centre to suspend the provincial constitution] *is most pernicious and should be deleted* and the whole constitution should be revised on the basis of provincial Governments having the residuary power vested in them.... *This question is by far the most important from the constitutional point of view and the future development of India and has very little to do with the communal aspect.* ...with regard to the question of separation of Sind and the N.W.F.P. Provinces, we cannot agree that they should wait until the Nehru Constitution is established with adult suffrage....The Musalmans feel that it is shelving the issue and postponing their insistent demand till doomsday..."[79] Speaking again, Jinnah said : "What we want is that Hindus and Musalmans should march together until our object is attained. Therefore it is essential that you must get not only the Muslim League but the Musalmans of India and here I am not speaking as a Musalman but as an Indian... If you do not settle this question today, we shall have to settle it tomorrow, but in the meantime our national interests are bound to suffer. We are all sons of this land. We have to live together. We have to work together and whatever our differences may be let us at any rate not create more bad blood."[80]

The Convention marked the triumph of Hindu chauvinism : all the Muslim League proposals were rejected and the break came. As he left Calcuttta for Bombay, Jinnah declared to an old Parsi friend : "This is the parting of the ways." Shaukat Ali attended the All Parties Muslim Conference, convened by the Aga Khan, on 1 January 1929, and in March Jinnah issued his 'Fourteen Points.' The offer of joint electorate was withdrawn. All Muslim leaders who had any influence over the community were driven into the communalist Muslim camp.

The Nehru Committee Report and the Convention formed a very important milestone on the road that led to Pakistan. In a book that appeared in 1932, a former information officer of the Government of India wrote :

"It may be that the die is already cast and that no united India as we understand it today will ever emerge. It may be that Moslem India in the north and north-west is destined to become a separate Moslem state or part of a Moslem empire. There is no reason yet to believe that this is so, but unless the processes that we have been watching at work are checked and reversed, there is good reason for believing that this might be the ultimate outcome."[61]

The Nehru Constitution

In its report the Nehru Committee recommended that India should enjoy the status of a dominion within the British empire. Under the constitution proposed by it, no bill passed by both houses of Indian parliament would become law without the assent of the Governor-General who would be appointed by the British King. Similarly, no bill passed by any provincial legislature would become an act unless it received the assent of the Governor of the province, an appointee of the British King, as well as that of the Governor-General. Even after a bill had become law on receiving the necessary assent, it would be void if the King in Council signified disallowance of it. And the Governor-General and Governors would have the right to dissolve or extend the life of the respective legislatures.[62]

According to the Nehru model, the executive power would be "vested in the King and is exercisable by the Governor-General as the King's representative, acting on the advice of the executive council, subject to the provisions of this Act and of the laws of the Commonwealth [of India]."[63]

The Nehru constitution proposed that "The Command-in-Chief of the military, naval and air forces of the Commonwealth is vested in the Governor-General as the King's representative." The then existing British Indian army would remain intact ; the officers, mainly British, would enjoy all rights and privileges as before ; and defence of India would be Britain's concern.[64]

Foreign policy matters, the Nehru constitution stated, would be decided in conformity with the foreign policy of the British Commonwealth.[85]

The Nehru Committee Report stated that all the debts incurred by the East India Company, "all expenses, debts and liabilities lawfully contracted and incurred on account of the Government of India" and so on, "shall be charged on the revenues of India alone."[86]

The report assured "European commerce" protection of its interests and promised "special treatment in future" in regard to "any special interests."[87]

The main report as well as the supplementary report promised the princes of the native states that their rights would not be encroached upon and that everything would be done "to secure to them the full enjoyment of their rights and privileges" if they agreed to join a federation between British India and the States.[88]

Under the sub-clauses 13A(a) and 13A(b), which the Supplementary Report added to the constitution, "the Central Government and the Parliament would have all the powers necessary and ancillary including the power to suspend or annul the acts, executive and legislative, of a Provincial Government" and "the Supreme Court would have no jurisdiction" in such cases.[89]

What kind of 'dominion' India did the Nehru constitution envisage ? According to the famous Balfour report of 1926, Great Britain and the Dominions were "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."[90] But the Nehru variety of dominion status was different: India as envisaged in the Nehru constitution was an India formally (*not only* informally) subordinate to the British raj in *every* aspect of domestic and external affairs.

Second, it was an India which would continue to be the happy hunting ground of all foreign and domestic exploiting classes—big capitalists and landlords, whose property 'lawfully acquired' would be protected.[91] The native princes also would thrive as before.

Third, India as envisaged by the Nehru constitution would be a unitary state where all powers would be concentrated in the centre, which would appoint governors,[92] give or withdraw assent to bills passed by the provincial legislatures, have all the powers "to suspend or annul the acts, executive and legislative", of provincial governments and to dissolve the provincial legislatures through governors.

Moving his resolution at the meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress session in Calcutta in the Christmas week of 1928, welcoming the Nehru Committee Report "as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems", Gandhi described it as "a *Charter* of *Independence*", "a sacred document."[93]

Though a co-author of the Nehru Committee Report, Jawaharlal formed together with Subhas Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar the Independence for India League (which was described by British Communist Page Arnot as "a complete sham")[94], and raised the demand for complete independence at different meetings—at a time when the country resounded with the demand for independence raised by the workers, the youth and students.

At the Calcutta Congress at the end of 1928, the younger Nehru moved an amendment to Gandhi's resolution. The amendment, while congratulating "the Nehru Committee for their labours, patriotism and farsightedness" and generally approving of "the recommendations of the Nehru Committee as a great step towards political advance," spoke in favour of the demand for independence.[95] That was the way of Jawaharlal. He commended to the Calcutta Congress the Nehru constitution without prejudice to the independence resolution of the Madras Congress! He had this talent—the talent of facing both ways.[96]

While accepting the Nehru Report, Gandhi's amended resolution stated that, if the Nehru Report was not endorsed by the raj by 31 December 1929, the Congress would raise the demand for complete independence and begin a non-violent civil disobedience movement. There was strong opposition to the resolution. The Congress pandal had been captured for two hours by about fifty thousand Communist-led workers who raised slogans demanding complete independence and establishment of an 'Independent Socialist Republic of India.' It required all the ingenuity of Gandhi to get his resolution passed by the Congress. Yet it was carried with 1350 delegates voting in favour of it and 973 in favour of an amendment insisting on the immediate goal of independence. Among those who led the opposition to Gandhi's resolution was Subhas Bose.

'Victory' in Bardoli

At the Calcutta Congress, President Motilal Nehru moved a resolution from the chair congratulating Vallabhbhai Patel and the peasants of Bardoli on the 'victory' over the British 'bureaucracy'. In his usual rhetorical style the younger Nehru wrote: "Bardoli became a sign and symbol of hope and strength and victory to the Indian peasant."[97] Like many other carefully-nurtured myths about the mahatma and his associates, the myth around Bardoli still persists.

What was the nature of the 'victory' in Bardoli ?

The Bardoli campaign, led by Vallabhbhai Patel and the local leaders of the Patidar Yuvak Mondal, was launched with the approval and support of Gandhi in February 1928 on the issue of the government's enhanced revenue demand—not on any basic agrarian issue. After the revenue assessment of 1925, the government raised the revenue demand by 22 per cent over the previous rates. This affected the interests of the landowning peasants, who were mostly Patidars and some *banias.* Share-cropping was much in vogue ; about half of the total area held by the landowners, according to official estimates, was rented out to tenants. By 1931, owner-cultivators constituted 24 per cent of the agricultural population while landless labourers, belonging to so-called lower castes, tribes and other backward communities formed 67 per cent.[98] Under the *hali* system prevalent in Gujarat, a farm worker was as good as a serf of his master and the chain of bondage extended from father to son. The Bardoli campaign did not aim at bringing about any change in the agrarian relations. As Gandhi said, "This satyagraha is limited in scope, has a specific local object."[99] A representative meeting of the landowning peasants of the Bardoli taluk in the Surat district, held on 12 February 1928, called upon the landowners to refuse payment of the revised assessment until the government was prepared to accept the amount of the old assessment or until it appointed an impartial tribunal to make a fresh inquiry to settle the question of revision. Pointing out that the people of Bardoli wanted only the appointment of an impartial tribunal and promised to abide by its verdict, Gandhi emphasized that "*this is no no-tax campaign launched for any political end.*"[100] So the aim of the campaign was quite modest—the setting up of a committee by the government to inquire into the landowners' grievances or continuation of the previous rates.

The Bardoli campaign demonstrated the solidarity of the people of the taluk with the exception of some landowning *banias*. The rural proletariat or semi-proletariat including the tribals were mobilized, though by dubious means,[101] behind the landowners, unlike during the Kheda campaign ten years earlier. Several camps were set up in the taluk ; hundreds of volunteers came from the outside and assumed charge of them. The network of *khadi mandals*—centres of the Spinners' Association—proved useful. Publicity arrangements were splendid. The campaign enjoyed the support of the political and commercial elite of Gujarat.

Besides volunteers, political leaders from the outside like Dr Ansari, Maulana Shaukat Ali, K. F. Nariman and Barucha visited the area to mobilize support of the Muslim and Parsi communities and to contribute to the success of the satyagraha. And, as Gandhi informed G. D. Birla, "Enough contributions [from the outside] are pouring in."[102]

The government started attaching land and crops and confiscating cattle and other movable property of the landowners for their refusal to pay the enhanced revenue demands. Nine members of the Bombay Legislative Council representing Gujarat constituencies resigned in protest against official repression[103] Vithalbhai Patel, then President of the Bombay Legislative Council, who soon became the President of the Central Legislative Assembly, also threatened to resign. He appealed to Viceroy Irwin and sought his intervention. The Congress Working Committee met in Bombay and warmly supported the Bardoli movement. Even Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, a former Law Member of the Government of India, asked the Government to institute an independent inquiry. The demand for an impartial inquiry was supported by all newspapers except *The Times of India*. Support came even from the British-owned *Statesman* and *Pioneer*.

Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas and other members of the powerful Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, tried to bring about a settlement.[104] Other prominent citizens of Bombay like K. M. Munshi put strong pressure upon the Bombay government to reach a compromise. On 18 July Vallabhbhai Patel and several others met the Governor of Bombay, who put the following conditions for a settlement :

"Firstly either the full assessment shall be paid forthwith, or *the difference between the old and the new assessment be paid into the treasury on behalf of the peasants.*

"Secondly that the movement to withhold land revenue shall be abandoned.

"If these proposals were accepted, Government would be prepared to take steps by the establishment of a special inquiry into *the alleged errors of the official calculations of facts*..."[105]

These terms were reiterated by the Governor on 23 July when he addressed the Bombay Legislative Council. Gandhi described "this insistence upon the deposit of the enhanced part of the assessment" as "inconceivable" and "absurd" and declared that *"it is a point of honour" for the satyagrahis not to make any such deposit.*[106] Publicly, he condemned the government in strong terms and wrote that "the Governor's threat and Earl Winterton's full endorsement of it cannot have any influence on the people of Bardoli." But at heart he was quite anxious to reach a settlement. On 24 July he wrote to Vallabhbhai "The 14 days ahead are very critical ; therefore not one word should be uttered from our side which may impede the settlement if at all there were to be a settlement."[107] The resistance of the peasants, though backed by massive support of the commercial and political elite of Bombay, seemed weakening. Even Mahadev Desai, one of the leaders of the satyagrahis, "insisted on compromising with government as there was no way out."[108]

Ultimately, at the intervention of a Rao Bahadur and Sir Chunilal Mehta, a member of the Governor's Executive Council, a meeting was arranged at Poona (now Pune) early in August between the government's representatives and Vallabhbhai Patel and members of the Bombay Legislative Council from Gujarat. On 6 August seven members of the Council submitted in writing that "*the conditions laid down by His Excellency the Governor...will be fulfilled....*"[109] A prosperous Gujarati landlord and businessman deposited with the government the difference between the old and the new assessment on behalf of the peasants; the Bardoli satyagraha was withdrawn, and a committee of inquiry was set up by the government. (Later, on its recommendation the revenue increase was reduced to 6·25 per cent).

Without waiting even for the committee to start functioning Gandhi congratulated "the Government of Bombay and the people of Bardoli and Valod and Sjt Vallabhbhai" and, addressing the volunteers, said that "the credit for the happy outcome goes to the Governor....*This is your and your Sardar's victory and the Governor has a share in it.*" Gandhi chided those who were dissatisfied with the "half-hearted compromise", and stated: "...I am the *acharya* of the science of satyagraha, and as such I tell you that *no victory could have been cleaner, straighter and more decisive.*"[110]

The strength of the movement lay in the solidarity of the peasantry. They also received immense support from different quarters. But what was really a compromise on the Governor's terms, described by the mahatma himself as "inconceivable" and "absurd", was palmed off as victory.

As Narahari Parikh writes, "Then started victory celebrations in Bardoli, in Surat and in other cities of Gujarat. They were as magnificent as they were inspiring."[111] The purpose was to advertise the Gandhian way—satyagraha—as the road to India's salvation.

NOTES

1 Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, 114-5, 204, 206.

2 R.C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 231.

3 David Page, *Prelude to Partition*, 130-1.

4 Ayesha Jalal and Anil Seal, "Alternative to Partition : Muslim Politics between the Wars," in Baker *et al* (eds.), op cit, 423, fn. 31.

5 *CWG*, XXIII, 201.

5a Tendulkar, op cit, II, 132.

6 See Chap. 7, Section 2, below.

7 *CWG*, XXIV, 213 ; see also 201, 231-2.

8 Ibid, XXIII, 415, 416.

9 Ibid, 572-3. Boycott of municipal bodies, district and local boards was never a part of the non-co-operation programme of the Congress. In 1924 a leading non-co-operator like Vallabhbhai Patel was president of the Ahmedabad Municipality, while Das was mayor of Calcutta, Vithalbhai Patel president of the Bombay Corporation and Jawaharlal chairman of the Allahabad Municipality. It was Gandhi who dissuaded Jawaharlal in February 1924 from resigning the chairmanship of the Allahabad Municipality (See Gopal, op cit, 96).

10 *CWG*, XXIV, 109-10.

11 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 268 ; Nanda, *The Nehrus*, 228. Palme Dutt has incorrectly attributed this statement to C.R. Das (Palme Dutt, op cit, 292).

12 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 267 ; Pandey, *Nehru*, 112.

13 Page, op cit, 111 ; Gopal, op cit, 85.

14 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 282-3 ; Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, 119 ; R.C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 206-9.

15 *CWG*, XXVII, 28, 35.

16 Ibid, 264-5.

17 Quoted in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, II, 667.

18 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 48.

19 *CWG*, XXV, 438-9 ; see also pp. 102-3 above.

20 *CWG*, XXV, 481-2.

21 Quoted in Nanda, op cit, 239.

22 *The Encyclopaedia*, VIII, 324-5.

23 Prasad, *Autobiography*, 390.

24 Bamford, op cit, 210.

25 Birla, *Bapu*, I, 9 ; *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 21, 26.

26 G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy*, 118-20 ; see also Page, op cit, 78-84.

27 Ibid, 121-2.

28 J. Nehru *A Bunch of Old Letters*, 49, 50.

29 G Pandey, *The Ascendancy*, 121-3 ; see also Page, op cit, 129-30, 131-4, 136.

30 *CWG*, XXV, 173.

31 Ibid, XXIV, 141-2, 270-1 ; XXV, 135-[illegible], 133, 166.

32 Ibid, 135.

33 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, 236.
34 *CWG*, XXIX, 380 ; XXVI, 316 ; XXVII, 114.
35 Quoted in Tendulkar, op cit, II, 309.
36 Birla, *Bapu*, I, 43. Serious riots broke out in Calcutta in April 1926 when an Arya Samajist procession insisted on playing music before a mosque in a predominantly non-Bengali area.
37 Ibid, 44-5 ; see also *CWG*, XXV, 137-8.
38 Ibid, XXVI, 283 ; see also 244, 508, 614.
39 Quoted in Tendulkar, op cit, II, 311 ; see also *CWG*, XXXV, 256.
40 Ibid, 257.
41 Ibid, XXV, 516 ; XXIII, 473 ; XXVI, 317.
42 Ibid, XXXV, 436, 437.
43 Ibid, XXIV, 402 ; XXVI, 540 ; XXVII, 10 ; XXXV, 524, 81 ; see also XXXV, 2, 106-7, 260-3 ; XXVI, 289 ; XXVII, 172-3 ; XXIX, 292.
44 Ibid, XX, 173 ; XVII, 519 ; XXVII, 12-14 ; XX, 178, 259 ; XXVI, 296 ; LXXXIII, 36.
45 Ibid, XXVIII, 192-3. Interestingly, in a letter of 10 March 1927, the Secretary, Maharashtra PCC wrote to the General Secretary, AICC, that "practically there will be no Congress work in my Province, on account of the rule of habitual *khaddar* wearing." At the time there were only 69 Congress members in the whole of Maharashtra. The letter, dated 7 April 1927, from the General Secretary, C.P. Marathi PCC to the General Secretary, AICC, told the same lamentable tale (AICC Papers, File G-43/1927 ; see also File G-80/1929 for the annual report of the Gujarat PCC for 1927-28, which stated that there were "325 members on the roll during the year 1928 against 270 of the preceding year."
46 J. Nehru, "A Foreign Policy for India," AICC Papers, File 8/1927.
47 Nanda, op cit, 279-83.
48 *Documents*, III B, 281-2.
48a Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, 123.
49 *Documents*, III C, 12-6, 188-91.
50 Nehru, *A Bunch*, 55-6 ; *CWG*, XXXV, 432.
51 Ibid, 437-8, 456 ; see also p. 62 above.
52 *SWN*, III, 10-15.
53 Nehru, *A Bunch*, 56-8.
53a See Gopal, op cit, 243.
54 *SWN*, III, 18-9.
55 See p. 90 above.
56 See p. 82 above.
57 Page, op cit, 166 ; *SWN*, III, 37, fn. 2.
58 *CWG*, XXXVI, 76.
59 Regarding Muslim representation on the committee, see extracts from Shaukat Ali's letter to Gandhi, *CWG*, XXXVIII, 486-8.
60 Ibid, XXXVII, 70, fn. 3.
61 Ibid, XXXVIII, 486.

62 Ibid, XXXVII, 180, 249 ; see also 196, 234.

63 Shaukat Ali's lengthy note on the All Parties Conference at Lucknow and "Fate of Muslims" in *Hamdard*, 3 Sept. 1928, AICC Papers, File A. P.—16/1928.

64 Page, op cit, 171, 172 ; see also 169-70.

65 *CWG*, XXXVII, 234 ; XXXVIII, 107.

66 See Page, op cit, 168-72.

67 *SWN*, III, 57, 61, 72.

68 All Parties Conference 1928, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution for India*, 31-3, 54-5.

69 Motilal to Gandhi, 14 Aug. 1929, Motilal Papers, File G-1, 67 (NMML); quoted in Gargi Chakravarty, *Gandhi*, New Delhi, 1987, 180-1 ; also B. N. Pandey, op cit, 186.

70 Ibid, 190-1.

71 Page, op cit, 132-4.

72 Motilal to Thakurdas, 17 July 1928, PT Papers, File 71 ; quoted in ibid, 173.

73 Nehru, *A Bunch*, 64.

74 *CWG*, XXXVIII, 486, 487.

75 B. N. Pandey, op cit, 184-5 ; see also Page, op cit, 184.

76 Nehru, *A Bunch*, 64.

77 *The Proceedings of the All Parties National Convention*, 11-4.

78 All Parties Conference 1928, *Supplementary Report of the Committee*, 36.

79 *The Proceedings of the All Parties National Convention*, 90-2.

80 Ibid, 93-4.

81 J. Coatman, *Years of Destiny : India 1926-1932*, London, 1932, 376 ; quoted in P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, 221.

82 All Parties Conference 1928, *Report of the Committee*, 100-1, 103, 104, 107-11, 113.

83 Ibid, 108.

84 Ibid, 109, 122 ; see also 12-3.

85 Ibid, 87-8.

86 Ibid, 118-9.

87 Ibid, 11.

88 All Parties Conference 1928, *Supplementary Report*, 15.

89 Ibid, 36.

90 See Dhirendranath Sen, *From Raj to Swaraj*, 241.

91 All Parties Conference 1928, *Supplementary Report*, 32.

92 Ibid, 39.

93 *CWG*, XXXVIII, 287, 291.

94 See Gopal, op cit, I, 126.

95 *SWN*, III, 270.

96 See pp. 90-1 above.

97 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 171.

98 Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India*, 91, 93.

99 *CWG*, XXXVI, 90.

100 *CWG*, XXXVI, 321.

101 As Ghanshyam Shah writes, "it was on caste and religious grounds that support was sought from various social groups." Vallabhbhai Patel, Kuvarji Mehta (the local leader) and others including Gandhi "deliberately used a religious idiom in their speeches and writings." Those reluctant to join the satyagraha were warned that "it would be difficult...for them to face God after death on account of their unholy actions". (In order to spare them this difficulty after death, the votaries of truth and non-violence did not hesitate to use methods of coercion to persuade them to join the satyagraha.) Muslims were told that it was "anti-Islamic and against the orders of the Holy Quran" not to support it. The tribals, who constituted "almost one-half of the taluka's population," were told that their gods Siliya and Simaliya, who had grown old, had sent Gandhi, "their new 'god'" to look after them. The new god wore a loin cloth like them and took goat's milk in preference to buffalo milk which was dearer. They were enjoined "to follow their dharma and obey the command of the apostle" (see Ghanshyam Shah, "Traditional Society and Political Mobilisation: The Experience of Bardoli Satyagraha", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, No. 8, 1974). This deliberate, concerted deification of Gandhi by his lieutenants to achieve their ends, this exploitation of the gullibility of the unsophisticated people, was practised—obviously not without his knowledge—not only in Bardoli but also in other parts of the country. This was one of the factors that contributed to the making of the mahatma's charisma. (More of it later.)

102 *CWG*, XXXVII, 77 ; see also XXXVI, 369, 420.

103 Tendulkar, op cit, II, 432.

104 Narhari D. Parikh, *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, I, 345-7.

105 *CWG*, XXXVII, 77-8, fn. 1—emphasis in *CWG*.

106 Ibid, 79.

107 Ibid, 93, 91.

108 Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India*, 101.

109 *CWG*, XXXVII, 424-5.

110 Ibid, 146, 160, 161, 162 ; see also 158, 170.

111 Parikh, op cit, 360.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE OTHER DOMAIN

1 *Peasant Uprisings*

Peasant struggles, fundamentally different from the Champaran, Kheda or Bardoli type, did not cease after the Bardoli decision in February 1922 to abandon what Gandhi called "aggressive civil disobedience." These were essentially class struggles which struck at the very foundations of imperialist rule and of the domination of the domestic classes which served as the props of that rule. These were the struggles which it was Gandhi's life-long mission to avert and suppress.

One such struggle was the Gudem-Rampa rebellion of 1922-4. In the vast agency area in the Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts, the *adivasis*, victims of cruel exploitation by the raj and contractors, moneylenders and traders from the plains, had risen in revolt many times, but their *fituris* (uprisings) had been suppressed by superior brute force. The uprising in Gudem and contiguous areas in 1922-4 extended to about 2,500 square miles and took the raj about two years to crush by mobilizing the notorious Malabar Special Police, Assam Rifles and so on.

The uprising was led by Alluri Sita Rama Raju, a young Telugu from the plains, who integrated himself with *adivasis*, won their love and confidence and became their hero. He had no faith in Gandhi's non-violence and rejected it as a method of struggle. Curiously, V. Raghavaiah describes Rama Raju as "a votary of non-violence and keen on following the Gandhian path...."[1] Raghavaiah contends that "the agitation led by the Raju did not take a violent turn till the latter stages of the agitation, when he could not control the thousands that flocked to fight under his banner..."[2] Another untrue statement that this disciple of Gandhi makes is that this uprising look place when the British authorities "were struggling hard to suppress Mahatmaji's countrywide agitation."[3]

"Mahatmaji's countrywide agitation" was withdrawn in February while this revolt started on 22 August 1922 with the raid on the Chintapalli police station to capture arms.

Interestingly, Raghavaiah approvingly quotes M. Venkatarangaiah, who writes :

"He [Raju] visualized the Agency struggle as a political movement to first rid the Agency of the British rule by resorting to the guerilla warfare, and later extend the movement throughout the country....*He was never a believer in non-violence*....He was convinced that to achieve freedom from foreign rule he had no other alternative except to choose the path of violence."[4]

This is only one of the numerous instances of how a genuine anti-imperialist struggle, which the Gandhians at first detested and decried, has been appropriated to uphold Gandhian politics, sacrificing truth in the process. It may be noted that in 1924 the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee had "dropped a resolution glorifying the Raju's leadership and exploits as smacking of approval of violence.'"[5]

David Arnold writes :

"...Rama Raju seems always to have been concerned to use the hills as a base for launching a military movement to liberate India from British rule....Rama Raju believed that a rebellion begun in the hills could become the base for a war of national liberation against the British."[6]

The immediate cause of the uprising was the force that was employed by the raj to make the hillmen render unpaid labour to build a road across hills and thick jungles. Rama Raju organized bands of hillmen and carried on raids on police stations to capture arms for his soldiers. It was Raju's policy to distinguish between European attackers and their native henchmen. When his men captured such Indians, they were set free and allowed to go.[7] In 1923 the rebels advanced as far as Malkangiri in the Koraput district of Orissa. Their attempts to extend the rebellion to the plains were foiled as the hills were cordoned off by the government.[8]

As the rebellion spread, brutalities were perpetrated by the raj on the villagers and measures were taken to prevent supplies of the necessaries of life from reaching the hills from the plains. Yet the uprising could spread to an area of about 2,500 square miles and could be sustained for almost two years because of the spontaneous help it received from the tribal villages, even from some in Orissa.

On 6 May 1924 Rama Raju was captured and shot: the hero died a martyr when he was only twenty-seven. The odds against which the *adivasis* were fighting were great. Despite their efforts, they could not link their struggle with the struggle of the working people in the plains. The Andhra Congressmen were very hostile to the revolt. David Arnold seems to be right when he observes that "a more basic reason for the hostility of the Andhra Congressmen was that they represented precisely those interests—the traders, money-lenders, contractors, immigrant cultivators, and lawyers—whose hold on the hills the *fituridars* were fighting to overthrow."[9]

The "great wave of lawlessness" that began to rise towards the end of 1921 swept through the rural areas of several districts of Bengal in 1922-3. To quote Rajat Kanta Ray, "At the beginning of 1922...there was a peasant movement from below, a groundswell which burst the bonds of Congress control."[10] Violating Gandhi's injunctions, some Congress workers had played a role at the initial stage in organizing peasant resistance against the oppression and exploitation by the Midnapur Zamindari Company, a European company which owned large estates in several districts of Bengal and was controlled by Andrew Yule and Co., one of the biggest European managing agencies in India.[11] The struggle of the *adivasis* and others against the European company was not confined to the Midnapur district but spread to Rajshahi and Nadia. Sharecroppers refused to pay rent in Rajshahi, and the company's indigo factories had to be closed down in Nadia. In the north and north-western parts of the Midnapur district—the Jangal Mahals—the *adivasis* and others refused to work under the Zamindary Company on very paltry wages, fought for regaining their lost forest rights and looted *hats*. The looting of *hats* was not indiscriminate; as Swapan Dasgupta observes, "In fact what comes across in their judicious discrimination and conscious destruction of articles of economic value to them is a political undermining of mahajani and sarkari power by a destruction of its symbols."[12]

By August 1922 there was a 'second wave' of the movement in the Jangal Mahals. Even the tenuous links with the Congress were snapped, and the movement spread to near-by areas in the districts of Bankura and Singhbhum. It was no longer confined to the estate of the European company but extended to the estates of Indian zamindars like that of Salboni. The *adivasis* fought with bows and arrows to enforce their traditional rights to cut wood in the forests and to catch fish in the tanks. Bengali-speaking sharecroppers and landless peasants, so-called low-caste Hindus and Muslims, fought shoulder to shoulder with them. They challenged governmental authority with death-defying courage until 1923 when their revolt was suppressed by superior force.[13]

Rural unrest spread to almost every district of Bengal. The refusal to pay union board rates developed into refusal to pay *chowkidari* taxes and even rent, ignoring the directives of Congress committees. Though all districts were affected, "civil administration came to the verge of collapse only in the worst-affected areas in the interior of four districts—Rangpur (north Bengal), Midnapur (west Bengal), Tipperah (south-east Bengal) and Chittagong (south-east Bengal)" by January-March 1922.[14] There were clashes with the police in various places. As noted before, the revolt in Chittagong spread to remote forest areas, and the police and forest officers became targets of attack; beat houses, forest offices and inspection bungalows were set fire to and, by May 1922, the Forest Department practically stopped functioning.[15] As Rajat Kanta Ray writes, "mass civil disobedience continued until July [1922] in remote rural tracts like Tipperah and Chittagong." And conflicts between landlords and tenants became very sharp "over an extensive area in North Bengal, comprising Pabna, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur, where tenants refused to pay illegal cesses to the zamindars..."[16]

After the setback of the peasant movement in Awadh in the months following January 1921, it revived again in northern Awadh towards the end of the year in the form of an Eka (unity) movement.

Initially it received support from some Congressmen and Khilafatists of Malihabad in Lucknow district. The movement raised the demand for commutation of grain rent into cash rent and urged peasants not to pay more than the recorded rent. The movement also declared non-co-operation with the raj. It swept through several districts—Hardoi, Bahraich, Kheri, Bara Banki, Sitapur and Lucknow—and "a whole countryside [seemed] arrayed against law and order." Peasant leaders like Madari Pasi (a so-called 'untouchable'), Sohrab and Isharbadi emerged out of the militant peasant movement, which soon passed out of the control of the Congress. Madari removed the headquarters of the movement from Malihabad to Sandila in Hardoi district, where the movement was particularly strong. The efforts of the Congress to establish control over the movement were frustrated. There were violent clashes between the rebel peasants on the one hand and the landlords' men and police on the other. Despite the declarations of a reward for information leading to his arrest, the government failed to capture Madari Pasi until June 1922. Large bodies of mounted armed police and a squadron of cavalry were employed by it to suppress the peasant struggle.[17]

During these years 1922-1928 there were many other struggles of the peasants and *adivasis* in different parts of India.

2 *The National Revolutionaries*

At the request of Chittaranjan Das and Gandhi, who asked them to give his non-violent non-co-operation a trial for one year, many of the Bengal revolutionaries joined the Congress. But they maintained their separate, secret centres. Their association with the Congress helped them to recruit members of their own organizations. They were completely disillusioned about Gandhi after the Bardoli decision.

With the repeal of the Indian Press Act in March 1922, the national revolutionaries started bringing out a number of journals like *Atma Shakti*, *Shankha*, *Bijoli*, *Desher Bani* and *Sarathi*. It is significant that articles extolling the greatness of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, written by revolutionaries like Sachindranath Sanyal and Upendranath Bandyopadhyay, appeared serially in journals such as *Shankha* and *Atma Shakti*.

In an article "Amader Laksha Ki" (What is our Goal?), published in *Shankha* of 30 October 1922, Bhupendranath Dutta wrote: "Those who want the liberation of the country will now have to renounce the romantic story of Mazzini, Garibaldi and *Ananda Math*. Now the task is to study Karl Marx and mass movements."[18]

In another article "Amader Path" (Our Path), Upendranath Bandyopadhyay, an old revolutionary returned from the Andamans, wrote: "Foreigners and Indians have combined to keep the masses under their feet. Nobody has yet called upon them in the name of real independence....Hindu-Muslim unity will not be achieved through any make-shift arrangement.....Keeping the Muslim ryots suppressed under the Hindu landlords is not the best means of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity."[19]

By early 1923, young revolutionaries grew impatient and wanted to launch terrorist actions in disregard of the more cautious advice of their leaders. The former organized an All Bengal Revolutionary Party, which had as its programme capture of government arms and ammunition, insurrection, guerrilla war and revolution, besides retaliatory terrorist actions against high officials.[20]

In January 1924 Gopinath Saha killed an Englishman mistaking him for Charles Tegart, Calcutta's notorious police commissioner. Sentenced to death, the young revolutionary told the court: "May every drop of my blood sow the seeds of freedom in every home of India."[21]

The Bengal government issued an ordinance in 1924 and imprisoned many revolutionaries, besides Subhas Bose. Subhas and several others were detained in the Mandalay prison in Burma under atrocious conditions. It is there that Subhas contracted tuberculosis.

In 1923, through the efforts of some revolutionaries like Sachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, the Hindustan Republican Association was formed. It declared that its object "shall be to establish a Federated Republic of the United States of India by an organized and armed revolution" and to abolish all systems of exploitation of man by man. It proposed as its task the organization of workers, peasants and the petty bourgeois youth.[22] It gradually extended its activities from Bihar to the Punjab.

A pamphlet entitled "The Revolutionary" and described as the "organ of the Revolutionary Party of India" (and supposed to be the work of Sachindranath Sanyal)[23] was widely distributed in Bengal, U.P. and Punjab. "The extensive method of distribution of this pamphlet," *The Bengal Administrative Report of 1924-25* stated, "was in itself an ample proof of the widespread organization of the conspiracy."[24] While expressing firm faith in armed revolution and upholding the objects of establishing "a Federated Republic of the United States of India" and abolishing all systems of exploitation, it affirmed: "It is a mockery to say that India's salvation can be achieved through constitutional means, where no constitution exists. . This independence can never be achieved through peaceful and constitutional means." Strongly refuting the allegation that the national revolutionaries were terrorists and anarchists, the pamphlet said that they did not believe that "terrorism alone can bring independence." While asserting that "Official terrorism is surely to be met by counter terrorism", it declared that "the party will never forget that terrorism is not their object." At the end it tried to reconcile the teachings of the "Indian *Rishis* of the past" with the teachings of Marxism.[25]

Between 1925 and 1928, several conspiracy cases were launched by the government against the national revolutionaries—Kakori Conspiracy Case in U.P., Dakshineswar Conspiracy Case in Bengal and Deoghar Conspiracy Case in Bihar. Many revolutionaries like Ramprasad Bismil, Rajendranath Lahiri, Raushan Singh, Ashfaqulla, Anantahari Mitra and Promode Ranjan Choudhury faced the gallows with fearlessness and courage that can hardly be surpassed.

Speaking of Kakori Gyanendra Pandey rightly observes: "...the Kakori men sparked off, however briefly, a nobler struggle at a time when large numbers of nationalists [?] were either getting bogged down in factional conflicts over electoral and legislative politics or even helping to spread the virus of communalism."[26]

By the end of August 1928, the Hindustan Republican Association was reorganized through the merger of groups in the Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Bengal and was renamed Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). Its manifesto, "The

Philosophy of the Bomb", perhaps written by Bhagwati Charan—a hard-hitting answer to Gandhi's vituperations liberally showered on them—is a remarkable document.[27]

Within a month from the date of Lajpat Rai's death on 17 November 1928, believed to have been caused by the police assault,[27a] Bhagat Singh and Rajguru, members of the HSRA, shot dead the police officer Saunders, who had taken part in the lathi-charge. This heroic act avenging the death of Lajpat Rai sent a thrill through the whole sub-continent.

Despite their realization that the key to the salvation of India lay in awakening and organizing workers and peasants, the national revolutionaries could yet hardly integrate themselves with them and overcome their urge to take part in individual heroic actions to rouse the people. In Calcutta in December 1928, Bhagat Singh said to Sohan Singh Josh of the Workers' and Peasants' Party : "We entirely agree with the programme and activities of your party, but there are times when the blow of the enemy has to be immediately counteracted by armed action to inspire confidence among the masses."[28] That the national revolutionaries were conscious of their limitation is reflected in what Bhagat Singh said to Josh on that occasion : "You do the organizing of the workers and peasants and we shall do the disorganizing of the British rulers. Let us have this division of work."[29]

3 *Student and Youth Organizations*

Referring to the year 1926, Subhas Bose wrote : "The most encouraging sign of the year was the awakening among the youth all over the country. They were disgusted with the narrow sectarianism of the older generation and wanted to chasten public life with the pure breath of nationalism. The youth movement appeared under different names in different provinces, but the impulse behind it was the same everywhere There was a feeling of impatience and revolt at the rotten state of affairs—a sense of self-confidence and a consciousness of the responsibility which they had towards their country."[30]

According to Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, students' associations were perhaps first organized in Bengal. It is the national revolutionaries who took the initiative in building them. The All Bengal Students' Association was set up with branches all over Bengal in 1928. Similar organizations grew up in other provinces as well. In some provinces student conferences were held before there was any organizational base.[31]

In December 1928 the All India Youth Congress held its first session in Calcutta. The accent in the speeches was more on militant nationalism than on socialism. The first session of the All India Socialist Youth Congress was also held in Calcutta towards the end of 1928. It showed unmistakably the influence of Socialism. The resolution, adopted by it, stated that "considering the present social, political and economic conditions of the country Communism is the only way of realizing complete social, political and economic freedom with all their implications."[32] The resolution further stated :

"This Congress of the Socialist youth of India is of opinion that the dictatorship of the proletariat as the vanguard of all exploited and oppressed elements of Indian society including the peasant masses, should be a necessary stage in the country for complete economic, social and political equality of the Indian people and the emancipation of the masses from the thraldom of their common enemy, the Indian bourgeoisie and British Imperialism."[33]

An important youth organization was the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, which was formed in Amritsar in April 1928. An organization of the same name had been set up in Lahore some months earlier. As Sohan Singh Josh, a leader of the Sabha, said, some young workers of Amritsar belonging to all communities, and sick of the Congress reformist politics and sick of the fights over communal questions, decided to hold a conference of the Punjab youth in April 1928, and the Sabha was founded. According to Josh, it was "a revolt of the petty bourgeoisie against the Congress leadership" and "a revolt against communalism." Among its aims and objects were "to establish a completely independent republic of labourers and peasants", "to organize labourers and peasants", to "help every economic and social movement which is quite free from communal feelings and which is calculated to take us near our goal," and to fight communalism. Bhagat Singh and his comrades played a leading role in the organization and work of the Sabha. "The Sabha", wrote Ajoy Ghosh, "became tremendously popular in the years that followed and played a leading part in the radicalization of the youth of the Punjab."[34] Anti-British romantic revolutionism, opposition to the policies of the Congress leadership and communal forces, and vague socialism guided the thought and practice of the leaders of the Sabha. In March 1931, learning from experience, the Sabha abjured terrorism and declared its faith in mass action on socialist lines.[35]

Another important youth organization, which was set up by communists in Bengal in 1928, was the Young Comrades' League. "The object of the League", as its constitution stated, "is to organise a radical and militant movement of the exploited and oppressed young men and women [of the lower strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie, workers and poor peasants] for (a) the redress of their immediate grievances, (b) the establishment of the independent republic of India on the basis of the social and economic emancipation of the masses."[36] The League was founded on the initiative of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, Bengal (to which we shall soon refer) and was affiliated to it. "A large number of documents seized in the Meerut case[37] searches from Calcutta", wrote Adhikari, "give proof of the intensive work the WPP conducted among the youth. This work enabled the WPP to draw in many young men and women into its active organizational work...."[38]

4 *Emergence of the Working Class as a Political Force*

The most significant event of the twenties was the emergence of the Indian working class as a political force.

As noted before, a wave of industrial unrest swept through India in 1918-20. There were many strikes in 1920 in which several hundred thousand workers participated—at a time when, according to the Industrial Census of 1921, a total of only 2·6 million workers were employed in establishments employing ten or more workers, including factories, railways, mines, water transport.[39] The upsurge among the workers led to the formation of trade unions which had been rare before World War I. The Bombay textile strike of 1918-9 was waged by the workers under their own leadership.

The Russian Revolution and the growing militancy of the workers warned the big bourgeoisie, and its men as well as some philanthropists and petty bourgeois liberals rushed to take over the leadership of the workers. As we have noted, it was at the request of Ambalal Sarabhai that Gandhi assumed early in 1918 the leadership of the Ahmedabad textile workers who had decided to go on strike. Anasuya Sarabhai, the leading millowner's sister, became his chief lieutenant. The Social Service League, which had been set up in 1911 on the initiative of Gokhale's Servants of India Society founded with the financial support of the Tatas, took keen interest in trade union activities. The League's affairs were conducted by N. M. Joshi, one of the leading trade unionists. "Ratan Naval Tata", to quote G. K. Lieten, "took the decision to support the League because he saw in it 'a constitutional and rational alternative to the violent methods...which aim at the subversion of the present regime'."[40] According to Lieten, the Tatas contributed to the Bombay labour movement "by subsidising the Servants of India Society (Joshi, Bakhale) with six thousand rupees a year."[41] Bakhale was also a prominent trade union leader. C. B. Baptista, a labour welfare official, was employed by the Sassoons, the leading textile magnates of Bombay, "for organizing a union, thus implementing an idea which had been aired by the millowners before the war."[42] The raj, too, was solicitous about building "a healthy trades-union movement" and strengthening "the hands of legitimate trades-unionists such as Messrs N. M. Joshi and V. V. Giri."[43] It is significant that in a press note issued on 23 February 1930, the eve of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Bombay government, while paying "a striking tribute" to Gandhi for the satisfactory working of the trade union in Ahmedabad, "deplored [that] there was no equivalent to the Mahatma" in Bombay.[44]

The All India Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920. Its inaugural session at the end of October, presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai, was attended by, among others, big compradors like Sir Lalubhai Samaldas, Lalji Naranji and H. P. Thackersey; Congress and Khilafatist leaders like Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel, Annie Besant, Jinnah, Umar Sobhani; and 'labour' leaders like N. M. Joshi, Baptista, B. P. Wadia and C. F. Andrews, besides "a sprinkling of working men." The British Trade Union Congress was represented by Josiah Wedgewood.[45]

It is not surprising that, to S. A. Dange, the presence of such people, to quote Ravinder Kumar, "represented an 'anti-imperialist' and 'national revolutionary' alliance that brought together millowners and merchants and bourgeois radicals and workers in a joint struggle against the British Government."[46] It is not difficult to understand that the Indian big bourgeoisie was seeking through its men to subordinate the young working-class movement to its counter-revolutionary alliance with the raj. The British imperialists, too, sought to guide the movement through British labour leaders, a number of whom like Tom Shaw, Graham Pole and Pethick-Lawrence visited India during this period.[47] They maintained close links with men like N. M. Joshi, Chaman Lal and Shiva Rao, active in the working class movement.

The following passage from the annual report for 1924 of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association controlled by Gandhi reflects the attitude of these labour leaders :

"In fact, what does the work of the union in the mills amount to ? It is nothing other than representation of just grievances, agitation for the provision of welfare work of the most elementary type, *prevention of strikes* and submission to arbitration of all points in difference. *In this the millowners have everything to gain.* Can we not, therefore, count on getting from them all sorts of facilities for the development of the union ?"[48]

In a similar vein did Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad, the chairman of the AITUC session held in Delhi in March 1927, declare : "We strive to solve all disputes between employers and workers by negotiation, arbitration and through conciliatory bodies—there has been no occasion up till now for the All India Trade Union Congress to call a strike of any kind."[49]

Despite them all, more and more workers were taking part in militant strike-battles.[50] We would refer to only one such battle. In 1925 the Bombay millowners decided to reduce the workers' food allowance which meant an 11·5 per cent cut in their wages. 150,000 workers went on a strike in September, which lasted

10 weeks, in order to fight the offensive of the millowners to depress the workers' already low living standard in order to ensure their own high profits. The strike ended in victory. The Government of India removed the 3·5 per cent excise duty on cotton textiles, the long-time grievance of Indian as well as British expatriate millowners ; and the notice of reduction of wages was withdrawn.[51] This removal of the 3½ per cent excise duty was an indirect gift of the workers to the millowners.

It was at this time—on 6 September 1925—when the Ahmedabad workers, too, were faced with a wage-cut, that the mahatma was preaching before them :

"You cannot ask for more pay when they are going through serious difficulties. A time might come when loyal labourers may have to come forward with an offer to serve without any wages in order that mills may not have to be closed down."[52]

Theoretically, the mahatma considered large-scale machine industry 'a great sin" : in practical life he was a great defender of the machine industry that existed then. In words, the mahatma was a friend of the poor : in practice, he was a friend of those who kept them poor.

Gradually, especially from about 1927, communists made their influence felt on the trade union movement. "1928", as Palme Dutt wrote, "saw the greatest tide of working-class advance and activity of any year of the post-war period. The centre of this advance was in Bombay. For the first time a working-class leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and operating as a single force in the economic and political field."[53] Though the upsurge was the highest in Bombay, the tide reached all other working class centres—in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Madras and the Punjab—and affected almost all industries—cotton, jute, engineering, coal-mining. The railways and railway workshops, too, were affected. More than thirty-one and a half million days were lost because of strikes and lock-outs, in which more than five lakh workers were involved.

The strike action was the response of the workers to the offensive of wage-cut, retrenchment and enhanced work-load, mounted by the business magnates, native and foreign. The strike of the textile workers of Bombay, which lasted about six months from April to October in 1928, was among the most heroic ones. A notable feature was that the strikers received some fraternal help from the workers of the Soviet Union, Britain, Germany and other foreign countries. It is not surprising that when the mahatma was approached with the request to help through his Ahmedabad Textile Labour Union, he refused on the plea that he was not convinced that the workers were in the right. The Ahmedabad textile workers were directly approached and they helped.[54]

It was during these class-battles that communists working through the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, particularly in Bombay and Bengal, stood by the workers, helped them to organize and provided leadership. During this time they organized several trade unions, among which the most powerful one was the Girni Kamgar Union of Bombay. "During the last ten years", David Petrie, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, wrote, "the Trade Union movement in India has rapidly developed and is now a political factor which cannot be ignored....A Communist Party now exists in India, and members of this party have been largely responsible for the formation of the majority of these Labour Unions over which they are thus able to exercise control."[55]

Another official secret report on "Events and Developments in the Communist Situation in India from September 1928 to January 1929" bemoaned: "The Labour situation in Bombay which was more or less under the control of the Communist Party...continued to deteriorate. The Communist Party captured nearly all the Labour Unions..."[56]

These struggles of the Indian working class had to face the combined might of the big bourgeoisie and the raj. Arrests, intimidation and beatings by the police, even firings, were resorted to by the raj. When a striking worker was killed by the police on 23 April 1928 in Bombay, a massive funeral procession of workers "marched with red flags in their hands and shouting 'Down with capitalism', 'Down with imperialism', 'Long live the workers', etc."[57] "The *political strikes* and demonstrations against the arrival of the Simon Commission in February [1928]", as Palme Dutt wrote, "placed the working class for the moment in the vanguard of the national struggle; for both the Congress leadership and the reformist trade-union leadership had frowned on the project and were startled by its success."[58] In January 1929, when the Simon Commission arrived in Calcutta, it was greeted with a complete hartal and a massive demonstration by about two lakhs of persons (an estimate by the British-owned *Statesman*). These were organized by the WPP, Bengal, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee led by Subhas Bose, the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress and a few other organizations.[59] As already noted, about fifty thousand workers led by Communists captured the pandal erected to hold the Congress session at the end of 1928 and passed a resolution demanding complete independence.

Workers held a 'monster May Day demonstration' in Bombay in 1928. 'May Day' was observed by workers in different parts of Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore, Amritsar and so on.

The Jharia session of the AITUC, held at the end of 1928, became, as B. F. Bradley said, "a tug-of-war between bourgeois-reformist co-operation with imperialism and an attempt to make the Congress give a real working-class expression."[60] The seekers after co-operation with imperialism were in a majority in the Congress but there were a determined fraction of Communists and some other militant working-class leaders. The former enjoyed a majority, for several militant trade unions, truly representative of the workers, like the Girni Kamgar Union, could not be affiliated to the AITUC because of technical reasons.[61] Yet the Congress session marked an advance. It decided to put up a fight against the Trades Disputes Bill, which sought to ban all strikes in the so-called essential services, sympathy strikes and strikes of a political nature. The Congress declared the AITUC's support to peasant demands like abolition of landlordism and restriction of interest on loans at 12 per cent and formulated demands of a radical nature for submission to the All Parties Convention which was meeting to consider the Nehru Committee Report. Besides complete independence, these demands included abolition of the princely states, nationalization of industries and land, and universal suffrage.

There was a contest for election of President of the AITUC between Jawaharlal Nehru, who attended the Congress, and D. B. Kulkarni, a communist worker. All the reactionaries rallied behind Nehru, who won by 37 to 30 votes.

The significance of the advance of the working class was not lost on the agents of the big bourgeoisie nor on the raj. In May 1928, Shiva Rao, chairman of the Executive of the AITUC, who came to have close links with the top Congress leadership as well as with the British rulers, declared: "The time has come when the trade union movement should weed out of its organization mischief-makers. A warning is all the more necessary because there are certain individuals who go about preaching the gospel of strike."[62] After the Jharia session was over, an open call either for expulsion of communists from the AITUC or for a split was given by trade unionists like Ernest Kirk and Shiva Rao.[63]

In his speech to the Central Legislative Assembly in January 1929, Viceroy Irwin stated that "the disquieting spread of Communist doctrines has been causing anxiety" and held out the threat to adopt measures.[64] The stage for the Meerut Conspiracy Case trials was being set.

5 *Birth of a New Force*

The Russian Revolution and the growing militancy of the workers contributed to the growth of Communism in India.

According to Muzaffar Ahmad, the Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded not in India but in Tashkent in the Soviet Union in October 1920 with seven members, five Indians and two foreigners who were wives of two of these Indians and who never set foot on Indian soil.[65] This 'party' had no programme, no party constitution and no contact with the basic masses of India. For sometime M. N. Roy, the founder of the 'party', functioned as a one-man 'CPI' from abroad —Moscow, Berlin or Paris. With enormous funds placed at his disposal by the Communist International (CI) to enable him to build a communist party in India, he produced a large quantity of literature. He brought out journals—first, *Vanguard of Indian Independence*, then *Advance Guard* and afterwards *Masses of India*.

His style of functioning was confined to maintaining close touch with the leaders in Moscow, contacting some persons in India through emissaries and correspondence, who might help him to achieve the goal, and to sending them a large portion of this literature most of which was intercepted by British intelligence. He was able to establish contacts with Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta early in 1922 through his emissary Nalini Dasgupta ; Sripad Amrit Dange in Bombay ; Singaravellu Chettiar in Madras ; R. C. L. Sharma in Pondicherry ; Ghulam Hussain in Lahore ; and a few others. Shaukat Usmani of the U.P. had joined his 'party' in Moscow and on his return tried to organize a group. Unfortunately, most of Roy's letters, journals and books could hardly escape police vigilance. The job of building a communist party in India from Europe had at least one serious disadvantage. Roy's correspondence, as the Director of the Intelligence Bureau during this period noted, was "extensively read" and served as "an unfailing source of information of proved accuracy as to the movement of men, money, and literature, and the knowledge derived from it has been used more than once to the discomfiture of our enemies."[58] The funds that he sent to his Indian contacts like Ahmad left them always dissatisfied and asking for more. It is his contacts in India who gathered small groups around them, which remained uncoordinated until December 1925.

At the invitation of Michael Borodin, whom Roy had met in Mexico, Roy attended the Second Congress of the CI held in July-August 1920 as Mexico's representative. The national and colonial questions were among the most important issues before the Congress. Lenin himself presented theses on these questions at the Congress and chaired the Commission on the subject set up by the Congress. In his draft theses Lenin wrote that in countries where "feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate ...all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement." "The Communist International", he held, "must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form."[67] In his 'Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions' to the Congress Lenin said that "we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national revolutionary movement rather than of the 'bourgeois-democratic' movement." But he pointed out that in a backward country "any national movement can only be a bourgeois democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population consists of peasants..." He spoke of the possibility of the backward peoples skipping the capitalist stage of development and going over to the Soviet system "with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries."[68]

In his Supplementary Theses, which were amended by Lenin, Roy held that "in the dependent countries two distinct movements... everyday grew further apart from each other. One is the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement, *with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order*, and the other is the mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation." While stating that "the foremost and necessary task is the formation of communist parties" in these countries, he affirmed : "In most of these colonies there already exist organized revolutionary parties which strive to be in close connection with the working masses. The relation of CI with the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be realized through the medium of these parties or groups, because *they were the vanguard of the working class* in their respective countries....The communist parties of the different imperialist countries must work in conjunction with these *proletarian parties* of the colonies."[69]

So long as Roy was associated with the CI, he exhibited a consistent tendency to exaggerate the political and organizational strength of the working class, particularly in India, and to paint quite a distorted picture.

One need not blame Roy for lumping together the entire bourgeoisie of such countries. Even today the legal, parliamentary 'communist' parties of India do the same thing. The undivided Communist Party of India also most often characterized the entire Indian bourgeoisie as 'national' and progressive and at other times as pro-imperialist, reactionary and counter-revolutionary. It was Mao Tsetung who for the first time formulated unambiguously that the bourgeoisie in colonies and semi-colonies like pre-liberation China was divided into two sections—comprador and national. He pointed out that the comprador section, which is nurtured by imperialist capital and serves as its intermediary, has been a prop of colonial rule since its very birth. On the other hand, the national bourgeoisie, which seeks independent development, is anti-imperialist and revolutionary but not consistently so. Because of its weakness and some ties with imperialist capital and feudalism, it vacillates: it is beyond its powers to lead the bourgeois-democratic revolution. That is why, as Mao pointed out, in a colony or semi-colony, it is the working class that alone can lead the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution and fulfil the tasks of the democratic revolution. This revolution which he called 'New Democratic Revolution'. opens up two possibilities—the development and expansion of capitalism or the beginnings of socialism. Under the leadership of the working class it would be possible, he said, for the people to take the road to socialism.[70]

But one cannot but blame Roy for his consistent distortion of facts. To claim in the Supplementary Theses that there did "already exist organized revolutionary parties which strive to be in close connection with the working masses" in most of the colonies in mid-1920 and to describe them as "the vanguard of the working class" and as "proletarian parties" was a travesty of facts. Speaking in the Second Congress in support of his theses, Roy said: "The growth of industry in British India has gone on at such a pace as can hardly be imagined here in Europe. Taking into consideration ...that the capital employed in British Indian industry has risen 2,000 per cent [during World War I and immediately after it, i.e., between 1914 and 1919], one gets an idea of the capitalist system in British India."[71] He repeated the same thing in his *India in Transition*, first published in 1922, which, according to him grew out of a report he had written to convince Lenin of the correctness of his view.[72]

Later, Roy accused Abani Mukherji of supplying him with wrong statistical material which he put in the first chapter of *India* *in Transition.* But he can hardly shirk his own responsibility. "Through the Soviet Trade Delegation in London", Roy wrote, "all the recent publications of the Government of India, including the census report, were ordered, and before long I was the proud possessor of a huge stock of Blue Books containing a mass of statistical material." He expected that the report "would back up my view of the nature and perspective of the Indian revolution" and "have the historical significance of Lenin's famous work"—*The Development of Capitalism in Russia.*[73] Not only the first chapter but all the chapters contain blatant distortions.

The following may illustrate how Roy revelled in misrepresenting facts. Writing about the Indian princely States, he stated: "The internal administration of none of these States is feudal.... All these States have Legislative Councils of their own, representing the local commercial and landowning class and lately the industrial bourgeoisie is fast making itself supreme....it is the bourgeoisie which wields the political power" even in the most backward of these States.[74]

When Roy analysed contemporary Congress politics, he was often sharp, incisive and correct. But on more fundamental issues of history he made serious mistakes. For instance, he said that "the liberal intellectuals assembled in the first sessions of the National Congress heralded the birth of a new India"; and that "The British conquest of India has essentially the significance of bourgeois revolution."[75]

Roy held important positions in the CI until he was expelled in September 1929. He became a full member of the Executive Committee of the International and joined its presidium in 1924.

While returning, the *muhajirs* who had received training in the Soviet Union under the guidance of Roy were arrested by the British police and flung into prison. Several conspiracy cases were started and twelve or thirteen of them were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.[76] It was the raj's policy to destroy even the embryo of communism before it had a chance to grow. "Wherever Communism manifests", wrote the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, "it should be met and stamped out like the plague."[77] (The mahatma was equally determined to fight and stamp it out).[78]

Small groups formed around Roy's contacts in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, U.P. and Lahore. But there was little co-ordination between them. In Bombay, Dange who had a millionaire patron in R. S. Lotvala, brought out in 1922 an English language weekly, *Socialist*, and in the same year Ghulam Hussain launched an Urdu monthly, *Inquilab* (Revolution).

As a mentor Roy was thorough From Berlin or Paris he would be sending very detailed instructions to his contacts in India "on every conceivable subject connected with their work." He would send them actual drafts of manifestos, constitutions and resolutions to be adopted by them and advise them even on the most minor organizational details.[79] But they nursed a grievance against him that he was not equally generous with the financial assistance they expected.

The Fifth Congress of the CI, held in June 1924, decided that there should be "very close contact between the sections [of the CI] in the imperialist countries and the colonies of those countries." Roy welcomed this decision and said : "The British Party must make its activities '*imperial*' in scope."[80] But soon arose a conflict between Roy and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) over the control of the Indian communists. The CPGB had set up a Colonial Commission which, in co-operation with a group of Indian students in London, sought to replace Roy as the mentor of the Indian communists. Roy, who did not relish such a prospect, commented that "this smacks of imperialism". At the intervention of the CI, the 'European Bureau of the CPI' (which later became the 'Foreign Bureau'), headed by Roy and with Clemens Dutt of the CPGB and Mohammed Ali (alias Sipassi) as two other members, as well as the Colonial Commission of the CPGB became the joint mentors of the Indian communists.[81] But Roy's influence on the latter soon began to decline.

Earlier, in September 1922, Charles Ashleigh was sent from Europe to India to get in touch with Roy's contacts Before being deported almost immediately on his arrival in India, he managed to meet Dange. The activities of the Indian communists were under close watch by the police. The raj, afraid of the potential danger communism represented, decided to strike. In about the middle of 1923, Shaukat Usmani was arrested, and soon after Muzaffar Ahmad and Ghulam Hussain and then Dange and Nalini Gupta were under arrest. The raj launched the Kanpur Conspiracy Case against eight persons—Roy, Singaravelu, R. C. L. Sharma, besides the above arrested persons. Ultimately, Usmani, Muzaffar, Dange and Gupta were put up for trial and each sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

Many of Roy's direct contacts in India were rather weak reeds. Ghulam Hussain turned an approver in the Kanpur case and was let off.[82] According to Overstreet and Windmiller, Sharma "had offered his services as an informer to the British" before he began to work for Roy in January 1923.[83] At the Gaya Congress Singaravelu said that "the method which we, as followers of Mahatma Gandhi, can use in attaining *swaraj* is non-violent non-co-operation. I have the greatest faith in that method."[84] In a manifesto he issued, Singaravelu denounced Bolsheviks and 'foreign agents.'[85]

During the Kanpur trial Dange insisted that he had disapproved of Roy's 'programme' and had no role in any conspiracy against the King-Emperor to deprive him of his sovereignty of British India.[86] The other accused persons denied everything.

An India Office document stated that, in *Socialist* of 23 December 1922, Dange had expressed alarm at Roy's 'programme' and disclaimed any intention of working for a violent revolution.[87] Muzaffar Ahmad, Dange's old comrade-in-arms, has quoted from a letter of 16 July 1923 from Bombay's Home Secretary A. Montgomery to J. Crerar, Home Secretary to the Government of India, in which Montgomery stated that the Governor of Bombay in Council thought it advisable not to arrest Dange, for he "is our most fruitful source of information as to Bolshevist activities" and "will provide us regular and useful information." In another letter to Crerar, dated 25 January 1924, Montgomery offered the same advice and observed "that he [Dange] is more useful to us than dangerous."[88]

In a letter, dated 7 July 1924, to the District Magistrate, Kanpur, alleged to have been written by Dange and Nalini Gupta after their conviction in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, they expressed their willingness "to give an undertaking to Government not to commit any more offences..." In another letter to the Governor-General in Council, also alleged to have been written by Dange on 28 July 1924, he referred to a conversation he had had with Bombay's deputy commissioner of police, who had hinted that Dange might serve as a police-agent. Dange offered to the Governor-General in Council to use his position, "enhanced by the prosecution," to do what had been expected of him and prayed for release. The petition to the Governor-General in Council was renewed on 19 November 1924.[89]

G. Adhikari has raised a very relevant question: "Are we to believe all the alleged statements in the Government of India files in the National Archives attributed to political leaders?"[90] Indeed, it would be wrong to accept as authentic the statements in the official files which are not corroborated by other sources.

When, in 1964, the above letters were discovered by Dwijendra Nandi in the National Archives and published, Dange, then chairman of the CPI, denied his authorship of them. But Nandi's arguments seeking to prove Dange's authorship seem unassailable.[91]

One Satyabhakta, who had set up his own Communist Party in Kanpur, which claimed to function legally, convened a conference of Indian communists in Kanpur on 26 December 1925. His idea was to form a *legal* communist party without international affiliation. Communists like S. V. Ghate, K. N. Joglekar, R. S. Nimbkar and J. P. Bagerhatta from Bombay, S Hassan from Lahore, and Singaravelu and Krishnaswamy Iyengar from Madras responded to Satyabhakta's *open* invitation. It was attended also by Muzaffar Ahmad, who had been released from prison in September 1925. A central committee was formed, and a party constitution was adopted at this conference held from 25 to 28 December, which has been described by Adhikari as "the first Indian Communist Conference." Singaravelu was elected president and J. P. Bagerhatta and Ghate general secretaries.[92] Meeting in

Madras towards the end of 1927, the central executive committee expelled Bagerhatta as a police agent.[93]

The Workers' and Peasants' Party

The most significant achievement of the communists in these years was the building and functioning of Workers' and Peasants' Parties. It is through these open, mass parties that the communists could reach and maintain close links with the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie and actually brought about a transformation of the working class movement. These parties helped also the process of radicalization of the petty bourgeoisie, especially the youth and students. In their work the Indian communists were greatly helped by British communists like Philip Spratt and Benjamin Francis Bradley. Spratt, write Overstreet and Windmiller, recalled in his *Blowing up India* that he had come to India with the mission to instruct the Indian communists "to form a workers' and peasants' party, which would serve as a legal cover for Communist activity."[94]

But more than a year before Spratt came, the early form of this kind of organization had evolved here. Spratt arrived in Bombay at the end of 1926 and Bradley in September 1927. The 'Labour *Swaraj* Party of the Indian National Congress' was founded in Bengal in November 1925 by, among others, Kazi Nazrul Islam (the poet), Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Qutbuddin Ahmad and Shamsuddin Hussain.[95] They did not belong to any communist group but wanted to build a party that would fight for national liberation and for the interests of peasants and workers. Its mouthpiece *Langal* (The Plough) in Bengali, afterwards changed to *Ganavani* (The Voice of the People), started appearing from the end of December. On publication, 5,000 copies of the first issue of *Langal*, the chief editor of which was Nazrul Islam, were sold in one day. The party was renamed the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal at the All Bengal Praja Conference held at Krishnanagar in Nadia in February 1926. Later, early in 1928, the name was again changed to Workers' and Peasants' Party.

In February 1926, while adopting its programme, the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party declared that its object was "the attainment of swaraj *in the sense of complete independence* of India based on the political, social and economic equality of women and men." It also declared that "Non-violent mass movement, *together with the use of force*, will be the main means for the attainment of the above-mentioned object." It put forward as its "basic demands" the nationalization of factories, mines, railways and so on and the employees' control over them and the abolition of landlordism and vesting the ownership of land in the "autonomous village community."[96] Prominent intellectuals like Dr Naresh Chandra Sengupta and Atulchandra Gupta were associated with it as president and vice-president respectively.

In Bombay, too, the WPP had started in 1925 as a 'Congress Labour Group', which later became the 'Congress Labour Party.' Finally, in 1927, the name was changed to 'Workers' and Peasants' Party', Bombay.[97] In the Punjab the WPP (Kirti Kisan Party) was formed in April 1928 and in the U.P. in October. Philip Spratt played an important role in the formation of the Punjab and U.P. parties. The Bombay WPP brought out *Kranti*, a Marathi weekly, as its mouthpiece. *Mehnat-Kash*, a weekly in Urdu, and *Kirti*, a monthly in both Urdu and Punjabi, appeared from the Punjab; and *Kranti Kari*, a Hindi journal, was the organ of the UP WPP.

An All India Conference of Workers and Peasants was held in Calcutta at the end of 1928, and the All India Workers' and Peasants' Party was formed. Defining the principles and policy of the Party, the Conference stated: "The struggle against imperialism for the complete independence of the country is thus the central item for the immediate future in the programme of the masses and of the Workers' and Peasants' Party."[98] It undertook to "expose the Nehru Report as a whole, and especially *the pretence* that it is possible to support simultaneously the report and independence [Jawaharlal's ploy]. The allied conception that dominion status is a 'step to independence' must also be exploded."[99] Resolutions adopted at the Conference advocated direct action, a general strike and mass campaign of non-payment of rents and taxes. Earlier, one of the resolutions finalized at the conference of the Bengal WPP, held in March and April, stated: "The Party must be prepared to co-operate, without losing its identity, with all parties and organizations which will fight for the liberation of India from imperialism.... It is necessary further to co-operate with organizations fighting for the freedom of the oppressed nations, and with the militant anti-imperialist working class of imperialist countries."[100] All these regional Parties as well as the all-India Party they formed placed before the people a well-defined anti-imperialist and anti-feudal programme—the overthrow of imperialist rule by revolutionary action, abolition of landlordism and nationalization of factories, mines, railways and so on. The Parties sought to build up class organizations of the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, to win over the youth and students, and to organize mass struggles to attain their goal. Their members included individuals as well as trade unions and peasant associations subscribing to their ideal. They regarded the landlord class and the entire bourgeoisie as counter-revolutionary. They failed to demarcate between the two sections of the bourgeoisie.

Within the brief period when these Parties worked, their achievements were remarkable. The WPP was not a communist party in disguise, though the communists were the driving force behind these organizations.[101] When workers were victims of wage-cut, rationalization and retrenchment, the leaders and cadre of these Parties successfully combated in different industrial centres the policy of class collaboration pursued by the reactionary labour leaders and assumed leadership of the workers in many places. This alarmed the alien rulers. An intelligence report stated : "By April 1928, the penetration of the trades-union movement [by the communists] was so complete that the extremists, as represented by the Workers' and Peasants' Parties, had not only secured a voice in the control of the movement, but had obtained—particularly in Bombay—a definite hold over the workers themselves." It lamented that "a handful of agitators has succeeded in temporarily paralyzing essential services and important industries..." "By the end of 1928, therefore," it said, "there was hardly a single utility service or industry which has not been affected, in whole or in part, by the wave of Communism which swept the country during the year. Transport, industrial and agricultural workers of every description, clerks, policemen, colliers and even scavengers were amongst the many who were subjected to, if they did not fall under, the baneful influence of this whirlwind propaganda campaign..." It regretted : "Even youths of all classes were to be harnessed to the Communist car of destruction and a network of study classes made its appearance alongside the shop and factory committees..."[102]

A communist journal rightly said :

"During the strike struggles of 1928-9 the workers of India emerged as a political force, a development of immense significance, and took active part in the nation-wide struggle for independence."[103]

It is these parties that emerged in the late twenties as an organized force that stood for independence—independence outside the orbit of imperialism. Almost at every Congress session during the twenties the communists raised the demand for complete independence.

During their brief lives the WPPs, except the Punjab Kirti Kisan Party, did not do much work among the peasantry. Perhaps the Indian communists and their mentors, unlike Mao Tsetung, hardly realized the importance of the role of the peasantry in the revolution in a predominantly peasant country like India.

It seems that the All India WPP, if it had time to grow, could become a great anti-imperialist mass organization representing the revolutionary classes of the Indian society and isolate the Congress leadership ideologically and politically. This kind of organization alone under the leadership of a mature Communist Party had the potentiality of developing into an effective alternative to the Congress Party which represented the hegemony of the big bourgeoisie and feudal elements. It had already presented a challenge to the Congress leadership on all issues of national importance. As the British Communist leader, R. Page Arnot, said, "this Workers' and Peasants' Congress [the All India WPP Conference at the end of 192-], the speeches at it, and its decisions, its resolutions, all give an unmistakable feeling of a real conscious mass movement for the first time in India, a real proletarian awakening. True, it is still only a handful of people. But in the tones of the Congress speeches there can be heard overtones, the rolling of the thunder, the noise of a great mass in motion."[104]

But the WPP died a premature death.

No doubt, a government haunted by the spectre of communism tried to destroy it. It introduced two repressive legislations in the Central Legislative Assembly in September 1928—the Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill and the Trades Disputes Bill. The first one was intended to deport from India British communists like Spratt and Bradley; the purpose of the second was to strangle the trade union movement by penalizing heavily all strikes with a political complexion and by banning strikes in the railways and other services. And to remove the communists to the safe haven of a prison, the government began to consider from September 1928 or from even earlier the advisability of launching a big, expensive conspiracy case against them.[105] And in a sudden swoop on 20 March 1929 they arrested thirty-one communists and other militant leaders including Bradley, Spratt, Muzaffar Ahmad, S. V. Ghate, Sohan Singh Josh, Dange, P. C. Joshi and Shibnath Banerjee, and imprisoned them at Meerut. (In June another British communist, Lester Hutchinson, was arrested.) Apprehending serious troubles in the wake of the arrests, the government mobilized several companies of British and Indian soldiers in Bombay and Calcutta. On the day after the arrests the workers of fourteen textile mills in Bombay went on strike, and protest meetings and demonstrations took place in various places.

The arrests of important leaders was indeed a grievous blow to the WPP. But the shock would have been overcome if the political line suffered no change. It was actually the instruction from the CI that brought about the untimely death of the WPP. "The Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies", adopted at the Sixth Congress of the CI in July-September 1928, stated:

> "Special 'workers' and peasants' parties', whatever revolutionary character they may possess, can be too easily at particular periods converted into ordinary petty-bourgeois parties, and accordingly, *the communists are not recommended to organize such parties.* The

communist party can never build its organization on the basis of a fusion of two classes, and in the same way also it cannot make it its task to organize other parties on this basis, which is characteristic of petty-bourgeois groups."[106]

The CI directed the Indian communists not only to reject "the principle of the building of the [communist] party on a two-class basis"—a principle none had formulated or defended—but to reject this principle in building a mass revolutionary party of the people. This form had evolved in November 1925 without relying on foreign directives after the Congress leadership had abruptly terminated the people's struggles and led them into the morass of demoralization and mutual strife. The original founders were not even communists, but the task of building it as a great anti-imperialist mass organization devolved upon the communists.

It was the temporary defeat of the revolution in China in 1927 that brought about an abrupt, complete change in the CI's understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie and of the intermediate classes in the colonies including India. The Theses of the Sixth Congress of the CI correctly maintained that the revolution in a colony like India was a bourgeois democratic revolution, the main content of which was agrarian revolution, led by the proletariat. But while, according to the formulation of the Second Congress, the *entire* bourgeoisie played an objectively anti-imperialist role, the Sixth Congress held that the *entire* bourgeoisie "capitulates to imperialism" and opposes agrarian revolution.[107] Moreover, it was full of distrust of the petty bourgeoisie and underestimated the role of the intermediate classes. The line formulated by the Communist Party of China at its Sixth Congress, held in Moscow in July 1928, suffered from the same mistakes, which had to be corrected by Mao Tsetung.

The world is vast and conditions differ from country to country. No party or individual, however great or wise, can have a correct understanding of the specific conditions in countries other than their own—conditions rich in complexity and some of which are unique. Mere generalizations do not help. The world is divided not only into classes but also into nations. It is for the communist party of every country to formulate its own policies and lead the revolution within its geographical boundaries. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung Thought should serve as guides, and discussion and exchange of experiences between the parties and mutual help are quite important. But a communist party worth the name should itself appraise the concrete conditions in its own country and determine its own policies. Foreign tutelage is always bad for the health of a communist party. While depending on the science of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung Thought it must not be afraid of making mistakes, for mistakes can hardly be avoided. It is only by learning from mistakes that a communist party can be correct. The alternative to 'do-it-yourself programme' is ideological, theoretical and political immaturity and proneness to make mistakes at every crucial moment of history, as the CPI has done. Proletarian internationalism does not imply foreign tutelage.

The WPP, the form of organization that the united front of revolutionary classes might assume, withered away mainly because of the dictates of foreign mentors. The WPP had come to acquire a communist colouring because of the *open* association of all leading communists with it. But it might reappear afterwards under a different name without the *open* participation of known communists in its work, if the communists were not instructed to have nothing to do with it.

During the brief period of 1927-8, the handful of communists achieved really great things. But, while building the WPP, they neglected the building of the communist party organization, especially an underground party centre. No wonder, the communist party was disrupted when the imperialists struck in March 1929.

NOTES

1 Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, 37.
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3 Ibid.
4 Quoted in ibid, 38, 39.
5 Ibid, 47.

6 Arnold, "Rebellious Hillmen", op cit, 135, 141.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid, 139.
9 Ibid, 139.
10 Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 305.
11 See ibid ; also Swapan Dasgupta, "Adivasi Politics in Midnapur", op cit, 134-30.
12 Ibid, 129.
13 Ibid, 130-4.
14 Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 299 ; Sumit Sarkar, "The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy", op cit, 300-3.
15 Rajat Kanta Ray, op cit, 301.
16 Ibid, 302-3.
17 This paragraph is based on Gyan Pandey's "Peasant Struggle and Indian Nationalism", op cit, 149, 153-5, 190.
18 Quoted in S. N. Mazumdar, op cit, 183.
19 *Works of Upendranath Bandyopadhyay*, 28-9 : quoted in S. N. Mazumdar, op cit, 142.
20 GOI, *Terrorism in India 1917-1936*, 32.
21 K. C. Ghosh, op cit, 371.
22 GOI, *Terrorism in India*, 195, 198.
23 Ibid, 191 ; Bhagat Singh, *Keno ami Nastik* (Bengali translation of a booklet 'Why I am an Atheist'), 4.
24 Quoted in G. Adhikari, "Development of Ideology of the National Revolutionaries", in N. R. Ray *et al* (eds.), op cit, 10.
25 See GOI, *Terrorism in India*, Appendix 3, 191-5.
26 G. Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress*, 94.
27 For the document, see GOI, *Terrorism in India*, Appendix 3, 199-208; regarding authorship, see ibid, 2; 61.
28 Quoted in Adhikari, "Development of Ideology", op cit, 12.
29 Sohan Singh Josh, "My Meetings with Bhagat Singh", in *Chittagong Uprising Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 21.
30 S. C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*.
31 S. N. Mazumdar, op cit, 144.
32 *IAR*, 1928, II, 455.
33 Ibid. See also *Documents*, III C, 1928, 100-2.
34 Ibid, 23-5, 291-8 ; see also Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India : Unpublished Documents 1925-1934*, 239, 240-1.
35 S. C. Bose, op cit, 161.
36 *Documents*, III C, 96.
37 The Meerut Conspiracy Case was instituted by the Government of India against communists and other labour leaders arrested from different parts of India in March 1929.
38 *Documents*, III C, 100.
39 Palme Dutt, op cit, 317, 333.
40 Lieten, *Colonialism, Class and Nation*, 69, 78.

41 Ibid, 149.
42 Ibid, 79.
43 GOI, Intelligence Bureau, *India and Communism*, 394.
44 *IAR*, 1931, I, 27.
45 Lieten, *Colonialism, Class and Nation*, 79; Sukomal Sen, *Working Class of India*, 165-6; Ravinder Kumar, "From Swaraj to Purna Swaraj: Nationalist Politics in the City of Bombay, 1920-32", in D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj*, 87-8.
46 Ibid, 88; Kumar refers to S. A. Dange, 'Introduction' to *S. V. Ghate*, New Delhi, 1971.
47 See Lieten, *Colonialism, Class and Nation*, 82; Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov (eds.), *A Contemporary History of India*, 146-7.
48 Quoted in ibid, 145.
49 Quoted in ibid; see also Palme Dutt, op cit, 335-6.
50 Ibid, 337.
51 See *Documents*, II, 527-9.
52 *CWG*, XXVIII, 162.
53 Palme Dutt, op cit, 338-9; for the growth of trade unions and trade union membership, see Pramita Ghosh, op cit, 12.
54 *Documents*, III C, 119.
55 Petrie, *Communism in India 1924-1927*, 278-9.
56 See Subodh Roy (ed), *Communism in India: Unpublished Documents, 1925-1935*, 62.
57 *Documents*, III C, 109.
58 Palme Dutt, op cit, 339.
59 *Documents*, III C, 15-6.
60 Ibid, 331.
61 Ibid, 156.
62 Palme Dutt, op cit, 340.
63 *Documents*, III C, 163, 376-7.
64 Palme Dutt, op cit, 340.
65 Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, 46-7.
66 Quoted in J. P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, 48.
67 *CWL*, XXXI, 149, 150.
68 Ibid, 241, 244.
69 *Comintern and National and Colonial Questions*, 44.
70 "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", *SWM*, II, 320-1, 326-7, 329-30; "On New Democracy", ibid, 343-4, 348-9; "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship", *SWM*, IV, 421-2.
71 *Documents*, I, 191.
72 Roy, *India in Transition*, 41; *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, 552.
73 Ibid, 551, 553-4.
74 Roy, *India in Transition*, 22.
75 Ibid, 174; *Documents* III B, 265.
76 *Documents*, II, 40-1.
77 Petrie, op cit, 298.

78 See p. 188 above.

79 GOI, Intelligence Bureau, *India and Communism*, 146.

80 See Haithcox, op cit, 40.

81 Ibid, 52 ; Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, 74-6.

82 *Documents*, II, 278-9.

83 Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, 62.

84 *Documents*, I, 589.

85 Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, 63-5.

86 Ibid, 67-8.

87 "Summary of Information Re. Indian Communists", dt. 17 May 1923, prepared in the India Office, pp. 223-37 ; See Unpublished Documents compiled by Subodh Roy and appended to Cecil Kaye, *Communism in India*, 227.

88 Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party*, 344 ; Dwijendra Nandi, "Foreword" to *Some Documents Relating to Early Indian Communists and Controversies around Them*, 37-8.

89 Home Poll. Dept., File 421/1924 and File 278/1925 (National Archives of India) ; letters reprinted in ibid, 109-13.

90 *Documents*, I, 26.

91 See Nandi, "Foreword", op cit, 22-31, 35-40.

92 G. Adhikari, "The First Indian Communist Conference", *Marxist Miscellany IV*.

93 Ibid, 40.

94 Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, 87.

95 Muzaffar Ahmad, *Samakaler Katha*, 80-98.

96 *Documents*, III A, 155-60.

97 Ibid, III B, 165.

98 Ibid, III C, 735.

99 Ibid, 721-2. For important documents of the WPP, see ibid, II, 682-5 ; III A, 155-62 ; III B, 165-80 ; III C, 244-90, 708-57.

100 Ibid, 268-9.

101 Ahmad, *Samakaler Katha*, 98.

102 GOI, Intelligence Bureau, *India and Communism*, 116, 117, 124, 125.

103 Quoted in ibid, 127.

104 Arnot, *How Britain Rules India*, 30 ; quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, 130.

105 S. Roy (ed.), op cit, 34 ff.

106 *Comintern and National and Colonial Questions*, 104-5.

107 Ibid, 83-4.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISOBEDIENCE : CIVIL AND 'CRIMINAL'

The Eve of Civil Disobedience

"During the whole of 1928 and 1929," wrote Subhas Bose, "there was so much unrest in the labour world that if a political campaign had been started at that time, it would have been well-timed."[1]

The unrest was not confined to the labour world. A 'strictly secret' assessment of the Indian situation prepared in the summer of 1929 by the Director of the Intelligence Bureau stated : "I regard the situation now confronting the Government of India as the gravest I have known in the course of some twenty years' contact with the revolutionary movements in this country."[2] It was a situation that caused alarm to the raj and that Gandhi and his associates sought to avert.

Criticising Palme Dutt for calling Gandhi "Jonah of revolution, this general of unbroken disasters...the mascot of the bourgeoisie", who sought "to find the means in the midst of a formidable revolutionary wave to maintain leadership of the mass movement"[3], Sumit Sarkar writes : "Such a tirade ignores the undoubted role of Gandhi and of Gandhian ideology and methods in the making of this 'formidable revolutionary wave."[4] Such a view is not peculiar to Sarkar but is shared by all Establishment historians, whether with or without a 'left' hue and whether seeking to present 'history from above or 'from below'.

The fact is, despite Gandhi and his ideology and methods and despite his close associates, the tide started rising towards the end of 1927. It was a combination of factors—not any individual or his methods—that contributed to its making. Among the main factors were the mood of resistance of workers, youth and peasants against intensified exploitation and oppression, and the support and leadership which the communists and other militant leaders provided. The top Congress leaders, friends of the Tatas and other business magnates, tried to disrupt the heroic working class struggles instead of helping them.

Subhas was entirely right when he said : "The leaders as a body were too anxious [in 1929] to find some honourable escape from the impending fight with the Government which was everyday becoming inevitable."[5] On 2 January 1929, immediately after the Calcutta Congress was over, Gandhi said to the press :

"Let the leaders of the British people make some definite, serious and sincere move to meet us within the year and then ultimatums and time-limits need not matter." He advised the people : "Get rid of the suspicion of *Britain's good faith* that is poisoning the political atmosphere of India and the way will be clear for an understanding between the leaders of the British people and the leaders of my own people that will solve all our difficulties."[6] In other words, it was the Indians' suspicion of imperialism's good faith that poisoned 'the political atmosphere of India' and stood in the way of an understanding between the leaders of imperial Britain and the Congress leaders.

Speaking at a public meeting in Calcutta on 4 March 1929, Gandhi declared :

"And if the Government will play the game, if the police will play the game, I promise we shall settle our business with Government without having resort to civil disobedience...Believe me I shall strain every nerve to avoid that issue."[7]

He burnt some foreign cloth at this meeting and, when asked by the police to sign a personal bond and to appear before the court next day, he signed the bond and, in a statement to the press, appreciated the notorious police commissioner Tegart's courtesy in not insisting on his trial next day and gave "an undertaking that till this case is decided there would be no burning of foreign cloth in Calcutta public squares."[8]

A little earlier Gandhi had said that but for non-violence "there might have been a blaze, for provocation of the gravest kind has not been wanting on the side of the Government [with all its 'good faith']."[9] In early May Gandhi wrote :

"When that freedom comes, *if it ever does*, it will have come through a gentlemanly understanding with Great Britain."[10]

On 12 August Gandhi told the *Hindu* that he would "wait for it [dominion status] till the midnight bell of December 31, 1929 rings. I hope Dominion status will be given by that time..."[11] Far from seeking to create any revolutionary wave, Gandhi expected the raj to play the game and make a gift of 'swaraj' by the end of 1929.

High-Level Negotiations

During this time, behind-the-scenes, high-level negotiations were in progress. In January 1929 Viceroy Irwin had interviews with Vithalbhai Patel, Congress leader and President of the Central Legislative Assembly, as well as with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, a 'Liberal' leader. Vithalbhai reported to Irwin that "Gandhi had said to him categorically that he was in favour of the British connection and that he would not make difficulty about an accommodation of the Dominion Status idea by which Foreign Affairs, Political and possibly Defence should be reserved in some manner to be defined."[12] Sir Chimanlal, who had seen Gandhi in the mean time, told Irwin "very positively...that neither Sapru, nor Motilal [then Congress president], nor Gandhi, expected or *wanted* full Dominion Status by either the end of this year or next year or probably for many years."[13]

At the end of February the mahatma himself met the Viceroy at a tea-party hosted by Vithalbhai.[14]

In March 1929 the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, Sir Grimwood Mears, who claimed that he was on "very intimate terms" with Sapru, the Nehrus—both father and son—, Malaviya and Sir Ali Imam, met Motilal, Sapru and Sir Ali Imam at Sapru's house. Mears informed Irwin that "The Pandit said to me—'Assume Dominion Status to consist of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 ingredients. *If in the discussion the least objection is taken to our having 2, 5 and 7, we shall acquiesce readily.* Once we get Dominion Status *of any quality—in however limited a degree*—we shall be content to prove ourselves responsible and then readily and without argument be given other and wider powers as with the passing of time we prove ourselves capable.'"[15] That is, the Congress leaders hoped to work to the satisfaction of the alien rulers and, after proving themselves worthy of their trust, to receive from their hands some more 'ingredients' of dominion status. And thus 'freedom' would broaden down from precedent to precedent.

Early in July Motilal appealed to the British government to "invite the representatives of India to a round table conference to discuss the constitution of India with a committee of the Cabinet on the basis of Dominion Status before it is too late."[16] Publicly, the basis would be dominion status; privately, some 'ingredients' of it.

According to Lord Goschen, who officiated as Viceroy during Irwin's absence from India in July to October 1929, "Motilal as well as Jinnah and Jayakar were anxious to counteract the 'Youth Movement'. Motilal had told him that 'a Round Table Conference ...would help him considerably.'"[17] Grimwood Mears also reported to Irwin that the Viceroy might "take it as a *matter of certainty* that Mr Gandhi (if health permits), Motilal and Sapru will most readily go to London."[18]

The Carrot and the Stick

To meet the revolutionary situation that developed between 1927 and 1929, the raj adopted, as usual, a carrot and stick policy.

As noted before, the government introduced two repressive legislations—the Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill—in the Central Legislative Assembly in September 1928.[19] The Public Safety Bill was thrown out by the Assembly, but it was promulgated by the Viceroy as Public Safety Ordinance 1929. The Trade Disputes Bill was passed by the Assembly. This additional power was assumed by the government to oust communists and other leftist leaders from the trade union field. Then, on 20 March 1929, thirty-one communist and other militant leaders were arrested, and elaborate preparations were made to launch the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Meerut was chosen as the venue of the trial, which lasted for about four years, in order to deny the accused facilities for proper defence.

With these arrests and the onset of severe economic depression the trade union movement suffered badly. The years 1929 and 1930 witnessed some big working class actions—the second general strike of the textile workers of Bombay from April to September 1929, the general strike of jute mill workers in Bengal in July-August 1929, the strike on the GIP Railway in February-March 1930 and the carters' strike in Calcutta in April 1980—all led by communists. But the working class organizations were gradually disrupted. At the annual session of the AITUC, held at Nagpur in November-December 1929, the communist delegates and their allies, who formed a majority on the basis of the old membership of the Girni Kamgar Union and the GIP Railwaymen's Union, forced several resolutions on the AITUC, which the reactionary labour leaders could hardly stomach. This led to a split in the AITUC, the latter leaving the parent organization to set up the Indian Trade Union Federation.

Because of severe repression as well as Comintern directives, the WPPs gradually withered away. The young Communist Party was divided into groups. In Bombay two small rival factions appeared—one led by B. T. Ranadive and the other by S. V. Deshpande.

When the Communist and working class movements received set-backs, the national revolutionaries were busy organizing themselves in different provinces, especially Bengal and the Punjab. A band of revolutionaries under the leadership of Surya Sen drew up plans to stage an armed uprising in Chittagong to liberate it and hoped that their example would be emulated in other places.

On 8 April 1929 Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt (then only twenty-four and twenty-two respectively) dropped two small bombs and fired some shots from the visitors' gallery in the Central Legislative Assembly. The sound of the bombs and revolver-shots resounded throughout India. These were intended not to hurt anybody, not even Lord Simon who sat near-by, but to register protest against the Trade Disputes Bill and "the wholesale arrest of leaders of the labour movement" and against the heart-rending conditions to which imperialism had reduced India. The Red Pamphlet which Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt dropped on the floor below expressed their revolutionary optimism that "from under the seeming sereneness of the sea of humanity a veritable storm is about to break out". In the midst of panic and disorder they had a fair chance of making good their escape. But they threw away their revolvers and waited for their enemies to capture them. It was their as well as the HSRA's object that their calm courage and heroic self-immolation would rid the people of fear and imbue them with the spirit of self-sacrifice. The Red Pamphlet said that "the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of a great revolution that will bring freedom to all rendering exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable. Long live Revolution."

The mahatma's ideology and methods demanded that he should vigorously denounce these national revolutionaries and try to isolate them from the people—his life-long mission. He repeatedly condemned Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt and put them in the same category as a Muslim fanatic who had stabbed a Hindu. And, forgetting his gospel of love and forgiveness, he wrote: "The assassin will, I expect, in due course pay the last penalty for his deed."[20]

The government launched the Lahore Conspiracy Case against Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt, Rajguru and other revolutionaries whom they had captured in the mean time. The revolutionaries transformed the court into a platform for giving the widest publicity to their political ideas and ideals, and the accused became the accusers and indicted the entire imperialist-capitalist system.

In their joint statement Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt said: "We have only marked the end of the era of utopian non-violence of whose futility the rising generation has been convinced beyond the shadow of doubt."

Even their days in prison were full of struggle. Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt and their comrades in prison defied their tormentors who subjected them to cruel physical torture and humiliation, and went on hunger-strike demanding their rights to be treated as political prisoners. The fast roused the people of the country, and their hatred for imperialism grew. Political prisoners in other jails, including the Meerut Conspiracy Case prisoners, observed sympathy hunger-strikes. On 13 September 1929, after 64 days of fasting and after suffering indescribable torment, Jatiadranath Das, a young revolutionary, died a martyr. He showed how the spirit of man, moved by great ideas, can triumph over all physical suffering and the terrors of slow, lingering death. The epic fast shook the whole of India. Everywhere there were mammoth demonstrations, and in Calcutta there was a mass demonstration in which 500,000 people[21]—almost an inconceivable number in those days—took part. The entire country paid to Jatindranath's memory the tribute of its deepest love and respect.

The only critic was the mahatma. He had described the historic fast undertaken by Jatin Das, Bhagat Singh and others on the issue of the political prisoners' rights as "*an irrelevant performance*" and "preferred to observe silence over the self-immolation of Jatindranath Das because I feel that by writing on it I would have done more harm to the country's cause than good."[22] (The mahatma preferred to observe silence also over the numerous arrests then going on in the Punjab). The mahatma had taken Jawaharlal to task for reproducing in the *Congress Bulletin* the joint statement of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. In reply, Jawaharlal explained that "I was myself a little doubtful as to whether I should give it but when I found that there was very general appreciation of it among Congress circles I decided to give extracts." He added that like Gandhi, he too disapproved of the fast : "I told this to many young men who came to see me on this subject but I did not think it worthwhile to condemn the fast publicly."[23] So, as on many other issues, Nehru's public stance was not the same as his private stand. In this letter Nehru, however, contradicted Gandhi who had gone so far as to allege that the joint statement was not the work of Bhagat Singh and Dutt but of their counsel ! It was the way of the mahatma that in matters concerning his political opponents he allowed his imagination to get the better of his regard for truth.

When the raj did everything possible to crush the communists, the militant workers and the national revolutionaries, it dangled the carrot before the Congress leaders. Irwin was not wrong when he wrote to the Secretary of State that "in nearly all quarters except the most extreme there would be very genuine relief if some face-saving device which afforded an excuse for the introduction of saner counsels could be found."[24]

The carrot was offered to the Congress leaders in the shape of Irwin's declaration of 31 October 1929. It stated that it was "implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status" and proposed a conference between the representatives of the British government and representatives of British India and the States. On the next day the London *Times* clarified that the statement "contains no promises and reveals no change of policy."[25] In answer to criticisms from Conservative and Liberal leaders, the British Prime Minister assured the House of Commons on 11 November that the Irwin declaration marked no change in the official policy.

Yet the carrot proved tempting enough to the Indian leaders. On 31 October, before the declaration was publicly made, Jayakar, Sarojini Naidu, Jinnah, Sir Purshotamdas and some others issued a statement hailing it. "Hardly had this Viceregal announcement been made," wrote Jawaharlal, "when, almost *with indecent haste*, so it seemed, a 'Leaders' Conference' was arranged at Delhi...."[26] In fact, it was his father, Motilal, who convened this conference. On 30 October, Motilal telegraphically invited 'leaders', including Sir Tej Bahadur and Sir Purshotam, to a conference on 1 November in order to adopt an agreed stand on the *expected* announcement. The Delhi conference issued a manifesto in which the signatories appreciated "the sincerity underlying the declaration" and hoped "to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion constitution suitable for India's needs." Referring to the doubt "expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph" in the Viceroy's statement regarding Dominion Status, they said that they understood it to mean "that the conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India" and *hoped* that their interpretation was not wrong.[27] The London *Times* commented that this statement meant "the scrapping of the programme on which Congress was to have met at Lahore."[28]

The Delhi manifesto was signed by, among others, Gandhi, Motilal and Jawaharlal. Subhas refused to sign it; instead, he, Dr S. Kitchlew (Lahore) and Abdul Bari (Patna) issued a separate statement opposing the acceptance of dominion status and participation in the proposed Round Table Conference (RTC). This created a problem for the younger Nehru, the professed 'socialist' and a leader of the Congress left-wing. On 4 November he wrote to Gandhi telling him that he had a "fever in my brain" and that he "differed fundamentally on that issue" from Gandhi. He described the Delhi manifesto as "injurious" and was afraid that "we have fallen into a dangerous trap out of which it will be no easy matter to escape." He added : "*we have shown to the world that although we talk tall we are owing* [*sic*] *bargaining for some tit bits.*"[29] Gandhi's soothing words soon helped to resolve his mental conflict.

The second conference of the leaders, held at the Nehrus' house at Allahabad on 18 November, expressed concern at the debates in Parliament, which had made the raj's stand quite clear that Irwin's declaration marked no departure from its past policies. But it supported and reaffirmed the Delhi manifesto.[30]

In his *Autobiography*, Jawaharlal wrote that, at the conference on 1 and 2 November, the Delhi manifesto "was agreed to, accepting the Viceroy's declaration *subject to some conditions*, which, it was stated, were vital and *must be fulfilled.*" In a footnote he mentioned the 'conditions'. One would search in vain for such conditions in the Delhi manifesto.[31] "The offer [of co-operation]", as Moore writes, was not conditional but was accompanied by the expectation" about 'a policy of general conciliation', release of political prisoners and 'predominant representation' for the Congress. "Irwin felt that these elements of the Manifesto [including the signatories' interpretation of the passage in the Viceregal declaration concerning dominion status] were included in order to help the extremists to save face..."[32] Srinivasa Sastri, one of the signatories, "emphasized that the term 'conditions' was purposely avoided at the Liberals' request..."[33]

Even if Jawaharlal's contention is correct, one may ask : Why was support extended by him and others to the declaration at the second conference of the leaders on 18 November, *after* the raj had made it abundantly clear that it would agree to no such 'conditions' ?

For putting his signature to the Delhi manifesto, Jawaharlal was expelled from the League Against Imperialism. On 23 November he wrote to Reginald Bridgeman, Secretary, League Against Imperialism (British Section), that he looked upon the Labour government's proposals "simply as a trap" and that "some of us thought it better from the point of view of a campaign for full independence at the Lahore Congress to give some rope to those here who wanted to adopt a compromising policy. This laid down a number of conditions and as it is certain that none of these conditions is going to be fulfilled, the Congress will meet in Lahore much stronger for effective action."[34]

One wonders why then did Jawaharlal have that "fever" in his brain, become so disconsolate and pen that letter of 4 November to Gandhi? And, why did he along with the other signatories uphold the manifesto at the second conference on 18 November? Jawaharlal's harping on 'conditions' and plan of giving some rope to those inclined to compromise seem to have been an after-thought to explain away his surrender.

Presiding at the AITUC session at Nagpur on 30 November, Jawaharlal stated: "Those of us who stood by independence stand by it still."[35] Referring to this, Irwin commented that Jawaharlal was "still trying to keep one foot in each camp."[36]

At this time Gandhi was "dying to give and secure true heart-co-operation" with the imperialist masters. As he wrote to Andrews, he was doing his "utmost best to smooth the way of Lord Irwin." He was hopeful "that a new era is about to dawn upon unhappy India." What he wanted was not a "Dominion Status constitution", not "to drive the English out", but "a real change of heart" of the rulers and "on the part of the officials in India, a true spirit of service." He seemed to want not a change of regime but, by his method of non-violence and truth, to convert "the English who under that state of conversion would work as willing servants of the country."[37]

Like his brother Vithalbhai and other Congress stalwarts, Vallabhbhai too was in favour of accepting the raj's proposals. He informed Gandhi that Jinnah was "quite convinced of the good faith of the Labour Government as well as the Viceroy, and thinks that this opportunity should on no account be missed."[38]

On 25 November Sapru reported to Irwin that he was "impressed with the obvious desire on his [Gandhi's] part to maintain a peaceful atmosphere." But Gandhi "felt that the situation was such that the country expected that something should be done by the Government which would enable him to put the advanced section of his following consisting mostly of young men in a reasonable and hopeful frame of mind..."[39]

Urged by Sapru, Vithalbhai and Jinnah, the Viceory saw Gandhi, Motilal, Vithalbhai, Jinnah and Sapru on 23 December. Contrary to what many have said, Gandhi and Motilal did not seek any promise from Irwin that the outcome of the RTC would be the immediate establishment of full dominion status. What they sought was an assurance from the British government that "the purpose of the Conference was to draft a scheme for Dominion Status" which it would undertake to support.[40] Such a 'scheme for Dominion Status', prepared at a conference of heterogeneous elements in London, would amount to no more than a few 'ingredients' of it. Yet the raj refused to oblige them.

Why did the Congress leaders put forward this condition despite their hunger for heart-co-operation with the imperialists? It was not difficult for Gandhi to sense the mood of the people. Subhas had resigned from the Working Committee and, despite his contribution to the Nehru Committee Report and signature to the Delhi manifesto, Jawaharlal was proclaiming his devotion to the cause of independence. At this stage it would be almost impossible to command the loyalty of the anti-imperialist masses and to prevent a split in the Congress, if at least a *show* was not made that the raj was prepared to concede the Calcutta Congress demand for the grant of dominion status. So, in order to contain the anti-imperialist struggle—not to begin it—Gandhi chose to tread a *seemingly* anti-imperialist path, as he had done in 1920. The mahatma thought it prudent to bide his time for returning to the path of co-operation with the imperialist masters.

For Show Purposes Only

The Lahore Congress at the end of 1929, wrote a Government of India Intelligence Bureau publication, was "held in an atmosphere surcharged with violent revolutionary feeling the like of which India had probably not seen since the Mutiny.....Many extremist bodies, of which the Kirti Kisan Party was but one, held miniature congresses of their own and discussed and passed hundreds of resolutions, many of them of an extremely violent character."[41]

Noted for his sense of the theatre, Jawaharlal, whom Gandhi selected as president of the Congress, rode at the head of the presidential procession on a white charger followed by a detachment of Congress cavalry.

Waiting almost till the midnight bell rang out the year 1929, the Congress adopted the 'historic' resolution on complete independence and authorized "the AICC whenever it deems fit to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience." Significantly, the resolution began by endorsing the Delhi manifesto and appreciated "the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for *swaraj*." It came to the reluctant conclusion that "nothing is to be gained *in the existing circumstances* by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference." At a meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress, an amendment sought to delete the preamble of the resolution—the endorsement of the Delhi manifesto and the appreciation of the Viceroy—but Gandhi, opposing it, said that both Motilal and he felt that "we have in the Viceroy a genuine person whose sincere aim is to secure peace." The amendment was lost by a margin of only one vote, 113 voting for and 114 voting against.[42] Subhas's amendment seeking to delete the qualifying phrase "in the existing circumstances" was also defeated. A resolution moved by Gandhi deplored a bomb attack on Irwin's train and condemned such action. The manifesto of the HSRA, "The Philosophy of the Bomb," said that, instead of declaring war against British imperialism, Gandhi had "declared war against the revolutionaries."[43]

Speaking at a meeting of the Subjects Committee, Gandhi stated that "by the exigencies of circumstances, we are now *compelled* to declare that the Congress wants complete independence..."[44]

As Subhas wrote, "no plan was laid down for reaching the goal—nor was any programme of work adopted for the coming year."[45] His own proposals for involving workers, peasants and the youth in the struggle and for organizing non-payment of taxes, general strikes whenever and wherever possible and a parallel government were rejected. He and like-minded persons were excluded from the Working Committee on the mahatma's plea that there should be a homogeneous 'cabinet'.

Indeed, the political situation as it developed from 1927 onwards allowed the Congress leadership "no alternative but to declare independence as its goal and civil disobedience as the means to achieve that goal", if it wanted to retain its anti-imperialist image.[46]

Yet "numerous back-doors", as the Secretary af State observed, were left open and, while seeking "to satisfy the enthusiastic youth", the Congress kept "effective options for the Working Committee."[47]

Many Congress leaders including S. Satyamurti of Madras held that the resolution on independence was *"for show purposes only"*. There were others who described it as "outrageous,"[48] and among those who opposed it were Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Ansari, R. A. Kidwai and Choudhury Khaliquzzaman.

Almost immediately after the Lahore session was over, the independence resolution was repudiated, though not formally, by the mahatma himself. While assuring the raj and the big bourgeois patrons that "the independence resolution need frighten nobody", he reduced the demand for complete independence to one for his 'Eleven Points',[49] which, juggling with words as usual, he described as "the substance of independence". And he assured the Viceroy that if those 'points' were conceded, he would then "hear no talk of civil disobedience".[50] As A. D. D. Gordon observes, these 'points' contained almost all the demands of the Bombay industrialists—reduction of the sterling-rupee ratio to 1s.6d., protective tariff on foreign cloth, passage of a coastal traffic reservation bill and reduction of military expenditure.[51]

Gandhi 'confessed' that he did "not see the atmosphere" for civil disobedience then. In his statement to *The New York World* of 9 January 1930, he declared that the door was kept open for a compromise. He gave the assurance that he was "not likely rashly to embark" upon civil disobedience the responsibility for initiating which rested on him. But he thought that though civil disobedience was "undoubtedly fraught with great danger and difficulties", it was "infinitely less so than the present danger of unbridled but secret violence breaking out in many parts of India...."[52]

When the supreme leader was reducing the demand for independence to what was a mockery of it and declaring his readiness to arrive at a 'compromise', Jawaharlal in a very indignant letter to the Secretaries of the League Against Imperialism wrote: "The Congress stands today irrevocably committed to *a fight to a finish* with British imperialism...."[53]

The 'Independence pledge', which the Congress leadership wanted the people to take on 26 January, seems to have been intended as a sop to the revolutionary mood of the people. It indicted British imperialism for impoverishing India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually, and declared: "We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence."[54] To curb the people's enthusiasm, Gandhi insisted that there should be no processions and no speeches while observing the 'Independence Day'.[55] Despite his instructions, the day was observed by the people throughout India with tremendous enthusiasm.

In order to debar the masses from participating in the proposed struggle, Gandhi wanted that "in the present state of the Congress no civil disobedience can be or should be offered in its name" and that "it should be offered by me alone or jointly with a few companions even as I did in South Africa."[56] Meeting in mid-February, the Working Committee authorized Gandhi and his associates "who believe in non-violence as an article of faith...to start civil disobedience *as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide.*"

Civil Disobedience to Combat 'Criminal' Resistance

The mahatma found the atmosphere around him "depressing" and was afraid that he might not be able to control the forces of violence. He held that "It is this menacing force of violence which threatens the land which must be first sterilized." To him, the main danger to the country was the "party of violence" which was "growing in strength"—"that secret, silent persevering band of young men and even women who want to see their country free at any cost." Since "Action alone has any appeal for them", he felt convinced that non-violent action in the form of civil resistance and civil resistance *alone* "can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime." In his message "To English Friends", he explained that, "notwithstanding its undoubted risks", he was "planning some sort of civil disobedience so as to get together all the non-violent forces and see if it stems the tide of onrushing violence". He was sure that "*civil disobedience alone can stop the bursting of that fury.*" Inviting the raj to be his ally, he said that "*British officials, if they choose, may regulate civil disobedience so as to sterilize the forces of violence.*"[57]

While appealing to the Viceroy to concede his 'Eleven Points', he asked the "*criminal* resister"—"the violent revolutionary"—to suspend fully his activity as "I, being a Mahatma, if left unhampered by him, am likely to make greater progress....I dread him more than I dread Lord Irwiu's wrath."[58]

On 2 March Gandhi made another appeal to the Viceroy. While assuring him that "the Resolution of Independence should cause no alarm", he referred to "the party of violence [that] is gaining ground" and pointed out to him that the civil disobedience he proposed to launch was intended *not* to achieve independence but to remove the evils such as the grievance about the sterling-rupee ratio, the pressure of land revenue and salt tax, and that when these grievances would be removed "the way to friendly negotiation will be open". He had "no desire to cause" any "embarrassment" to the Viceroy and would be glad if the Viceroy would care to discuss matters with him.[59] But Irwin refused to oblige him.

The mahatma left his *ashram* early on the morning of 12 March and started for Dandi on the sea-shore with a band of followers to break the salt-law and initiate civil disobedience. The party was seen off by a number of Ahmedabad millowners. Was it for complete independence that Gandhi launched the movement, as the legend says? Hours before he sailed out of his *ashram*, he declared that he "would be prepared to consider a proposition for a Conference" and thus abandon civil disobedience, if the raj agreed "to concede a few main points" (out of his famous 'eleven points') and promised to concede the rest as soon as possible. He would "seriously reconsider his position" if *only* his demand for reduction of civil and military expenditure was met.[60] (Almost at the same time—on 14 March—Jawaharlal was declaiming: "One special feature of the struggle initiated by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress is that there is no room for any compromise.")[61] This was the demand of the Indian big bourgeoisie as well as of British expatriate capitalists. In 1922 Thakurdas had organized and led a deputation of Indian and European business magnates to the Viceroy to urge "a general retrenchment in the mounting expenditure of the Central Government."[62] After he had broken the salt law, Gandhi categorically stated: "The present campaign is not designed to establish independence..." In his "Message to America" he affirmed: "The national demand is not for immediate establishment of Independence but is a preliminary step to a conference...to remove certain prime grievances, *chiefly economic and moral*", among which was the salt tax.[63]

So, the civil disobedience movement, as planned by the supreme leader, aimed at achieving *not* independence *nor* dominion status, *nor* some 'ingredients' of it, *nor* all the 'eleven points', but a few 'points'—'chiefly economic and moral'—as a token of 'victory' that might enable him to terminate civil disobedience and stem and disperse the revolutionary wave.

While craving for a few concessions, Gandhi repeatedly declaimed, as Nehru did, that the struggle he was entering upon was "the last fight", "the final struggle for freedom", "a life-and-death struggle" and so on. At the same time he did not forget to express his appreciation of the raj's wisdom in not interfering with his march.[64]

The march, which took about twenty-five days, was a triumphal one. As Gandhi passed through villages, he addressed meetings where people flocked from surrounding areas. "Everywhere", says David Hardiman, "there was a carnival atmosphere..."[65] Eminent leaders came to meet him at different stages of the march. So did merchants and millowners from Bombay and Ahmedabad who were appreciative of the service that his campaign for khadi was rendering them and "contributed large amounts."[66] "With the newsreel cameras of the world clicking away", as Palme Dutt wrote, the march received world-wide publicity 'through the press, the cinema and every other device.' Not only was the march not interfered with by the raj but the wide publicity of every detail was possible only with the active encouragement by it. Palme Dutt commented : "...the free encouragement and permission given by the imperialist authorities for this publicity, in striking contrast to their later attitude (and to their very alert arrest of Subhas Bose, the leading left nationalist, even before Independence Day, before the struggle opened), was evidently not simple naivete and failure to understand its significance, but, on the contrary, very sharp understanding of its significance and direct help to ensure the diversion of the mass movement into the channels which were being prepared for it by Gandhi."[67]

The Government of India did appreciate the diversionary character of Gandhi's move and conveyed to the Bombay government its view that it "was advantageous to the government."[68] It was also advantageous to the Indian big bourgeoisie in more ways than one. Lalji Naranji wrote to Thakurdas : ' Mahatma Gandhi's movement has diverted the people from adopting violent methods to his non-violent methods."[69] Thakurdas shared the view.[70] Citing a letter from the Collector of Ahmedabad to the Government of Bombay, Judith Brown writes : "Ahmedabad millowners appear to have supported Gandhi in the belief that he was a force against violence and would protect their industry from disorder."[71]

Gandhi's *main* purpose of launching civil disobedience was to divert people from the violent to the non-violent path, "to sterilize the forces of violence" and he expected the raj to be his ally. Just before he began his march to Dandi, he stated : "Today there is greater risk of violence, in the absence of any *safety-valve in the shape of a movement of non-violence* like the one I am contemplating.

...It is growing upon me now that it is only by setting the force of non-violence in motion that I can get these elements [forces of violence] under control." Civil disobedience was designed by the mahatma as a 'safety-valve' through which all the accumulated resentment and anger of the people against the raj would find an outlet without causing disorder, and hatred would be replaced by love and strife by concord.[72]

The official historian of the Congress and Gandhi's close associate pointed out: "It is really to subdue violence that this movement was inaugurated."[73] Another friend of Gandhi, Andrews, basing himself on Gandhi's letters to him and other writings, wrote in the *Spectator* of 27 September 1930 that Gandhi took "such a *seemingly* desperate action" because he realized that the "only way to meet such a situation [one of violent reaction among the people to government repression] was to *forestall* it by a campaign of non-violence and himself take the lead in it however great the risk."[74] Gandhi's *primary* purpose was to forestall, divert and contain revolutionary struggles; the *secondary* one was to win some concessions for the big bourgeoisie.

As a 'safety-valve', civil disobedience as planned by Gandhi helped both the raj and the Indian business magnates and both appreciated the usefulness of Gandhi's non-violence. In June 1930, the Secretary of State was writing to the Viceroy that "even Gandhi's support, with his doctrine of, and possible belief in, non-violence might be worth having, and even necessary, to rally those who are yet untouched by what is becoming an ordinary, violent nationalist insurrection."[75]

One of the main planks of Gandhi's civil disobedience was the boycott of foreign cloth and promotion of khadi. It was no doubt good that boycott helped the millowners to dispose of their accumulated unsold stocks during the depression years. Vallabhbhai Patel assured the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, that "The vigorous boycott propaganda of the Congress ought to be helpful to the mills in disposing of some of their goods." Boycott was hailed by G. D. Birla as "the sheet anchor of Indian industries in a very critical period of trade depression."[76] Even Homi Mody, who was hostile to civil disobedience, acknowledged that "the *Swadeshi* movement...undoubtedly helped the [Indian] industry during a period of grave difficulty" and added that "the future may be regarded as full of hope."[77]

According to the mahatma, the business magnates were also the *chief* beneficiaries of his tireless propaganda in favour of khadi. Many villages of Gujarat, his home-province, through which Gandhi passed on his way to Dandi, had few or no spinning-wheels, even after incessant khadi propaganda for years.[78] Asking G. D. Birla to "collect contributions from the millowners", he wrote : "Khadi may or may not gain, but the mills are certainly making enormous profits as even Wadia has admitted. If only the mills understand they can benefit still further. Time alone will convince them." Again, he stressed that "the khadi activity has benefited Indian mills." "If the boycott", he wrote to Rameshwardas Birla on 28 April 1930, "can be successfully implemented by the efforts of the millowners only, khadi need have no place in it....the prosperity of the mills and the success of foreign cloth boycott lie in spreading the love of khadi and increasing its production. *Verb Sap.*"[79]

Gandhi made the salt law the prime target of his civil disobedience—"a superbly ingenious choice", as Judith Brown calls it. It was "the least oppressive of all the imperialist laws"; the total revenue it yielded in a year in the whole of India, according to Gandhi, amounted to Rs 6 crore.[80] But it had several advantages : not many people outside the coastal areas would find it possible to join the movement ; chances of violent confrontation with the minions of law and order would be minimized ; it would divert attention from the pressing problems of the peasantry and industrial workers in those depression years ; and at the same time, it could be made into a highly emotional issue.

Referring to the "talk of disobeying other laws", Gandhi said that he believed "in concentrating attention upon the salt laws" and ruled out violation of other laws—"the chaukidari tax laws", "the forest laws" and regulations concerning the use of grazing areas.[81] He advised people to promote khadi and boycott foreign cloth and liquor, besides breaking the salt laws, and wanted picketing, especially by women, of shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. He was very much opposed to the boycott of other foreign goods. "It is madness", he said, "to try to boycott everything. The idea is indefensible."[82]

With great fanfare the mahatma broke the salt laws on 6 April and inaugurated civil disobedience. He was allowed full freedom to preach what he called "sedition" until the early hours of 5 May when he was arrested. "...British policy", as B. B. Misra writes, "was not to treat Gandhi harshly....British policy was therefore to see that Gandhi should not 'pass out of the picture', leaving the more serious and active terrorist campaigns to be faced by the Government."[83] During these days high-level, behind-the-scenes negotiations continued. During an interview with the Viceroy, Vithalbhai Patel informed him that, to quote Misra, "all that Gandhi now sought 'was an assurance that the proposed [RT] Conference would in fact discuss the admitted difficulties inherent in Dominion Status, and the Government would give a *private* undertaking to Gandhi that the purpose of the Conference would thus be to produce a scheme of Dominion Status *subject to re-examination of these difficulties*'."[84] To repeat, the goal of the mahatma's civil disobedience was *not* independence, *not* dominion status, but some concessions which 'the admitted difficulties inherent in dominion status' might permit. And before and after launching civil disobedience he was eager to abandon it, if such an assurance was obtained.

The movement that rocked India in 1930 was of several hues and had several centres. Ravinder Kumar has given an interesting description of three centres in Bombay and the differing kinds of 'disobedience' they launched on 6 and 7 April. There was the camp set up by Gandhi's close associate Jamnalal Bajaj at the prosperous suburb of Ville Parle and housing satyagrahis and "a formidable bevy of rich Gujarati and Marwari matrons." On the morning of 6 April selected satyagrahis "went through the ritual of preparing salt." It was a very solemn affair and these respectable law-breakers were treated by the raj with the respect they deserved. On the other hand, the GIP Railwaymen's Union sent batches of strikers to the suburban stations of Kalyan and Kurla, who lay down on the track with red flags in front of them to disrupt the flow of traffic.

This kind of 'disobedience' was punished with arrests and firing at both places. Another centre, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, organized processions and sent batches of volunteers every day from 7 April onwards to break the salt law, undeterred by arrests.[65]

The situation in Bombay caused much disquiet to the raj and to the Indian and European business magnates. Besides the enthusiastic petty bourgeois youth, merchants and small traders were ardent supporters of the movement. The indigenous business class was a divided house. The millowners and 'their market allies' (to borrow A. D. D. Gordon's expression) and exporters like the Thakurdases were strongly opposed to civil disobedience, rallied to the support of thegovernment and tried later to play the role of the intermediary between the government and the Congress leadership, while other merchants, brokers and sub-brokers, whom Gordon calls 'marketeers', lent full support to the Congress for some time. The 'marketeers' cherished many grievances against the former as well as against the raj over issues like control over the raw cotton market. Besides, the slump in the cloth market affected the merchants who dealt in foreign piecegoods.[66] The Bombay Native Piecegoods Merchants Association representing dealers in foreign piecegoods was one of the earliest merchant bodies to announce its intention to boycott foreign goods. The 'marketeers' called frequent hartals and closed the markets too often. Bombay Governor Sykes was of the view that, to quote Judith Brown, 'many businessmen were glad of a patriotic excuse to put off fulfilling obligations they could not meet in a period of falling prices. Purshotamdas Thakurdas confirmed Sykes's impression when he told Irwin that the bulk of mercantile support for boycott came 'from people who, seeing themselves for other reasons on the verge of bankruptcy had been anxious to cover their tracks in a cloud of patriotism."[67] Depression, boycott and frequent hartals created a difficult situation in Bombay. Homi Mody wrote : "The continuous 'hartals' being observed in the various markets, and the suspension of business activities on the part of certain sections of trade have completely dislocated business, and brought about a paralysis of the economic structure, particularly in Bombay."[68]

All Gandhian satyagrahis were not as fortunate as the satyagrahis of the Ville Parle camp of Bombay. On 21 May 1930 about 2500 volunteers led by Sarojini Naidu proceeded to take possession of the government salt works at Dharasana in Gujarat. As batches after batches of non-violent volunteers moved towards the salt works or sat down near them, they were "methodically bashed into a bloody pulp" by lathi-wielding policemen, as Web Miller, a foreign correspondent of the United Press, U. S. A., who was an eye-witness, wrote. He added: "I felt an indefinable sense of helpless rage and loathing, almost as much against the men who were submitting unresistingly to being beaten as against the police wielding the clubs..."[89]

Congress-led movements were generally confined to holding militant demonstrations, hoisting of the Congress flag, picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops and breaking salt laws wherever possible. Everywhere, except on rare occasions like the satyagraha before the Dharasana salt works, violence flared up in disregard of the mahatma's instructions when the raj used repressive methods to cow the people into submission. Arrests, beatings, searches were common things; firing too was often resorted to. When jails overflowed with prisoners, ruthless baton charges on young pickets became quite common. To minimize outbreaks of violence Gandhi appealed to women to do the picketing, which they did in many places. Gandhi was arrested on 5 May when his control over the movement was slipping away. As the government communique on his arrest regretted, he was unable to control his "unruly followers" though he "continued to deplore these outbreaks of violence." So the government decided to lodge him in jail where "Every provision will be made for his health and comfort during his detention."[90] On the day before he went to prison, he "felt that the people could select other laws also to break wherever they could conveniently" and "had in view ..the Chaukidari Tax in Bihar and the Forest Laws in the Central Provinces."[91] Meeting soon after his arrest, the Working Committee sanctioned campaigns with the approval of the respective PCCs for non-payment of land tax in ryotwari areas (where it was paid directly to the government) and for non-payment of the chaukidari tax in provinces such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It also permitted "the breach of Forest Laws" with the sanction of the respective PCCs.

The decision to begin a movement for non-payment of revenue in Ras and other villages of Gujarat was taken by Patidar peasants after the arrest of Vallabhbhai Patel in March 1930 against the advice of the district Congress leaders as well as against Gandhi's advice.[92] The Patidars were not very squeamish about the use of violence. By May the movement spread throughout Gujarat, and the Bombay Governor Sykes was reporting to Irwin that in "most of Gujarat we have practically a mass movement, and we cannot effectively apply coercion unless we are prepared for a clash on a very large scale..."[93]

To crush the movement the government spared no coercive efforts. Peasants were beaten, arrests made, lands confiscated and sold for a song, and state terrorism was practised. Brailsford "saw at Borsad the cage with bars—exactly like a wild beast's cage at the zoo, in which prisoners, "as yet unconvicted, were kept day and night..."[94] Thousands of peasants migrated to the neighbouring Baroda state. "By February 1931," writes Hardiman, "there was a feeling in Kheda that the government had been brought to its knees." The raj's coercive measures had failed to break the morale of the peasants. What broke their morale was the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 5 March 1931. Neither were their confiscated lands returned to them nor was land revenue halved, as one of the mahatma's 'Eleven Points' had stipulated. "The Patidars therefore considered the pact a betrayal" and Sardar Patel "never overcame the bitter legacies of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the ruthless crushing of the revenue defaulters in 1932."[95]

In U.P. there was a widespread no-tax campaign in the winter months of 1930-1. Peasant agitation had started in the middle of 1928 and the famous peasant leaders like Baba Ramchandra were active. The catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural produce and the oppression by the landlords, who employed their muscle-men to extort out of the peasants the rent, which had risen during the boom of the post-war years, and illegal cesses, and who enjoyed the support of the colonial state, were provoking resistance among them.[96] Though the conditions were ripe, Congress leaders, many of whom, including the president and the general secretary of the UP PCC, were themselves big or middling zamindars, "avoided calling for a general no-tax campaign in the rural areas."[97] It was in October 1930 that the Executive Council of the UP PCC gave permission to the District Congress Committees to start the campaign, if they wanted to. Both zamindars and tenants were asked not to pay, but zamindars refused to heed the Congress appeal. In many districts, even in districts where the District Congress Committees started no such campaign, tenants refused to pay rent.[98] The movement was strongest in Rae Bareli and Agra. With the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin pact the Congress reversed its stand and advised peasants to pay as much as they possibly could. "The UP Congress *volte face* on the question of peasant protests following the Gandhi-Irwin agreement," says Pandey, "was surely one of the most bizarre episodes in the history of the Civil Disobedience Movement—and one of the most significant."[99]

In Bihar after some ceremonial breaches of the salt laws by leaders, youth and students, the anti-salt law movement petered out. But an anti-chaukidari campaign began in May 1930 and spread to several districts of north and central Bihar. The local Congress leaders—small landlords and rich peasants—had no particular respect for the ideal of non-violence. In late 1929 the Congress had set up an *ashram* at Bihpur in north Bhagalpur, where 300 volunteers were given training on semi-military lines and learnt how to fight with lathis and daggers. Several violent clashes between the people and the police took place in late 1930 and early 1931.[100] The anti-chaukidari campaign found strong support among small landlords and rich and middle peasants. In a place like Barhee in Monghyr, "for some months during 1930 and 1931 all trace of the British Raj seemed to have disappeared, and local Indian officials were taking their orders directly from Barhee Congressmen."[101]

In the coastal districts of Andhra—East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur—the civil disobedience movement was linked to a protest movement against the increases in land revenue rates, that had been going on since 1925 and received support of the land-owning peasantry. They too felt betrayed "when Gandhi agreed to the Pact and so ruled out the use of direct action politics at the time when they seemed to be most needed." The local Congress leaders "convened a sub-committee of the Andhra Ryots' Conference and challenged the Pact by agreeing to initiate a no-rent campaign if it became necessary..." Later, Gandhi and Patel informed the provincial leaders that the Congress should not encourage land revenue agitation while the Pact was in force."[102]

In Tamilnad, Rajagopalachari, who sought to make civil disobedience as harmless and non violent an affair as possible, staged his own march to break the salt law in April 1930. But, as David Arnold writes, "Despite the attachment of Gandhi and his lieutenants to non-violence, civil disobedience in Tamilnad thrived upon the violent eruptions of the masses and the violent repression by the police."[103]

A strong anti-chaukidari movement developed in the district of Midnapur in Bengal. It too was not inhibited by much respect for the creed of non-violence. Indiscriminate arrests, merciless beatings, even firings at several places could not break the resistance of the militant people. It became so effective that the Home Secretary of the Government of India noted : "...I would put Midnapur as the district where the prestige of Government has fallen more than in any other."[104] The movement gathered strength also in Arambagh (in the Hughli district of Bengal), where too the solidarity and militancy of the peasants were remarkable.

The East Bengal countryside, which had witnessed tumultuous struggles in 1921-2, was rather quiet except for the picketings and demonstrations in which the Hindu petty bourgeois youth were the main participants. The Muslims as well as most of the Namasudras (members of a peasant caste in East Bengal) remained aloof from the movement.

In Maharashtra, Karnatak and the Central Provinces it was the Congress that first organized a Forest Satyagraha. In several taluks of North Kanara in Karnatak palm and date trees were cut down on a large scale to enforce prohibition, and many village officials resigned. A no-tax campaign also started in Kanara.[105] Soon the control of the Congress over the movement disappeared. A tribal revolt surged through parts of Maharashtra and the Central

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Provinces. Violent attacks on police parties and forest guards were a feature of this struggle. Tribal women fearlessly resisted attempts by the police to arrest their men. The Kolis of the Western Ghats and the Gonds of the Central Provinces were in the forefront of this struggle.

Chittagong, Peshawar, Sholapur

In April 1930, when Gandhi was camping at Dandi, the heroic uprising in Chittagong burst on the sub-continent like a clap of thunder. It is usually described as an 'armoury raid'—a terrorist action—but it was truly a revolt organized by a band of revolutionaries under the leadership of Surya Sen to liberate Chittagong from imperialist rule. The plan was to overthrow imperialist rule at least in a part of the country by armed force and to set an example to be emulated by others. It was drawn up with exemplary thoroughness and executed with rare courage and competence. The uprising started at 10 P.M. on 18 April. Two armouries—the Police Armoury and the Auxiliary Forces Armoury—were captured in a surprise, lightning attack; simultaneously, the Central Telephone and Central Telegraph offices were raided and the means of internal communications and of communications between Chittagong and the outside world were destroyed, and the railway link disrupted. The Europeans fled to the Chittagong port and sailed away in a ship that was anchored there. From the ship they sent a wireless message to Calcutta to rush military help to Chittagong. Some army officers directed machine gun fire at the rebels, but the latter effectively silenced it. A Provisional Revolutionary Government headed by Surya Sen was set up. The story of Chittagong is a saga of fervent patriotism and fearlessness and heroic self-sacrifice. The Chittagong uprising was followed by innumerable struggles of national revolutionaries who tried to counter state terror with revolutionary terror.

Another historic event occurred soon after. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Khudai Khidmatgars, and other Pathan leaders had been arrested, and protest demonstrations were fired upon by the police and several persons killed. In Peshawar, there was a spontaneous hartal on 23 April and there were huge processions and demonstrations. The raj called out the army and used even an armoured car to intimidate and fire upon the people, killing many and wounding many more. But two platoons of Garhwali soldiers refused to obey the order to fire on the anti-imperialist demonstrators and fraternized with them.[108] The determined resistance of the people and the Garhwali soldiers' refusal to murder and maim their countrymen forced the British on 25 April to withdraw from Peshawar. Peshawar was freed from imperialist rule until 4 May when the British returned with reinforcements. Sixty-seven Garhwali soldiers were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and their leader Chandra Singh to death, which was later commuted to transportation for life.

Another glorious struggle which closely followed those in Chittagong and Peshawar was the uprising of the workers in the textile city of Sholapur in Maharashtra. The workers of Sholapur went on strike on 6 May to protest against the arrest of Gandhi. After several persons were killed by police firing, an insurrectionary situation developed. The people, mainly workers, burnt down six police stations, killing two policemen. The district court complex also was set on fire. British soldiers fired indiscriminately, killing and wounding many persons. But the people could not be cowed. The District Magistrate and police officials fled away from the town. For three days—from 10 to 12 May—the government did not exist and the people maintained order. Battalions of British soldiers were rushed to Sholapur and Martial Law, which was promulgated on the night of 12 May, continued for 49 days. State terror was unleashed. On 12 January 1931, four leaders of the Sholapur uprising were hanged in the Yeravda prison (from which, on 26 January, Gandhi was released). Bombay and Ahmedabad observed complete hartal to express their resentment against the executions. The police resorted to lathi charges and firing to break up a huge meeting of workers in Bombay convened in honour of the Sholapur martyrs. The body of the worker who was killed in police firing was carried in a big procession led by communists and Kandalkar, a non-communist trade union leader of Bombay.

How did Gandhi and the Congress high command react to

Chittagong, Peshawar and Sholapur? On receipt of the news from Chittagong, Gandhi deplored the events and talked of fighting on two fronts—"both the violence of the Government and the violence of those among us who have no faith in non-violence." He observed "that the Viceroy has answered the Chittagong *disturbance* with the exercise of his extraordinary powers" and, without a word of criticism of the extraordinary atrocities that those 'powers' allowed, added: "That was only to be expected."[107] About Peshawar, he wrote: "I did not like at all what happened in Peshawar. If the reins of Government fall into the hands of such persons, will they not rule in the same way? Will they not break the heads of the poor?"[108] Not a word of his, written or spoken, breathed any condemnation of the raj for breaking the heads of several hundreds, mostly poor persons. One may remember the deep hatred he felt for the Garhwali soldiers who had refused to kill or wound their countrymen. In an interview to a representative of the *Daily Herald* in prison, the mahatma said that he was gravely alarmed at the violence said to have been committed at Sholapur and grieved at the death of two policemen but not at the numerous killings by soldiers and policemen.[109] Meeting at Allahabad in mid-May, the Working Committee regretted "the outbreaks of mob violence in certain places" and could not "too strongly condemn such violence."[110]

Behind-the-Scenes Negotiations

Sumit Sarkar writes that "in the June-August 1930 period... Gandhi was *still* rejecting any compromise."[111] Such a view seems rather queer. As noted before, the mahatma, "dying for co-operation" with British imperialism, was seeking before Lahore a few "ingredients" of dominion status—self-government minus control over defence, foreign affairs and various other vital subjects—to "enable him to put the advanced section of his following .. in a reasonable and hopeful frame of mind." After Lahore, he reduced the demand for independence to his 'Eleven Points', some economic reforms which were not the substance, but the mockery, of independence. On the eve of the Dandi march he proclaimed his intention to abandon civil disobedience, only if a few of these 'points' were conceded. In a letter of 18 May, after the Viceroy had announced that steps were being taken to hold the RTC in October 1930, Gandhi wrote to him that he was interested not in the "best constitution" but in the abolition of the salt tax, prohibition and a ban on import of foreign cloth.[112] And from an interview with him in prison on 20 May, the *Daily Herald* correspondent, George Slocombe, "gathered that even at this critical hour a settlement is possible and that Mr Gandhi is prepared to recommend to Congress the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement and co-operation in the RTC on the following terms: 1 The terms of reference of the RTC to include the framing of a Constitution giving India 'the substance of independence'. 2 The acceptance by the raj of Gandhi's demands for the repeal of the salt tax, prohibition and a ban on foreign cloth. 3 Amnesty for political prisoners. 4 The remaining seven points to be left for future discussion.[113]

So, during all this period, Gandhi showed his readiness to ditch civil disobedience, if the raj was willing to confer a few economic and moral gifts. In July, as we shall see, he was prepared even to dispense with them.

In the mean time, a statement, dated 25 June 1930 and approved by Pandit Motilal, then acting Congress president, announced that if "a *private* assurance" was given by the raj or if an "indication [was] received from a responsible third party" that the raj "would support the demand for full responsible government for India, *subject to such mutual adjustments and terms of transfer as are required by the special needs and conditions of India and by her long association with Great Britain and as may be decided by the RTC*", Motilal "hoped that such an assurance and its acceptance would lead to the abandonment of civil disobedience..."[114] Interestingly, in June when Motilal met Thakurdas in Bombay, he "confided the belief that the satyagraha movement would not last longer than three months all told."[115] Not surprisingly, like the mahatma, the pandit was anxiously searching for 'a face-saving device' to withdraw the civil disobedience movement.[116]

It was the statement of 25 June and Motilal's interview with Slocombe on 20 June that started a series of negotiations between the Viceroy and the jailed Congress leaders, in which Sapru and

Jayakar played the role of brokers.[117] In his 'Note to Nehrus' of 23 July, Gandhi explained his "personal position" that "if the RTC is restricted to a discussion of safeguards that may be necessary in connection with full Self-Government during the period of transition," he would have no objection and civil disobedience would be called off. "Here was a readiness," writes R.J. Moore, "to attend a Conference concerned not with Dominion Status but with 'safeguards'!"[118] Gandhi also withdrew his previous condition that the repeal of the Salt Act, prohibition and ban on import of foreign cloth must precede the discontinuance of civil disobedience. When Jayakar saw Gandhi again on 31 July and 1 August, Jayakar was convinced that Gandhi was eager for a settlement and willing to attend the RTC. Gandhi told him that 'he was not fighting for the sake of a victory, but desired to create an intensity of feeling as a demonstration and thought that he had done so sufficiently long.'[119]

The government arranged a special train to carry Motilal and Jawaharlal from their Naini prison to the Yeravda jail to meet Gandhi and other leaders and have the benefit of discussion with them. The result of the discussion was the joint letter of 15 August, signed by Gandhi, the Nehrus, Vallabhbhai and three others. It said that they would be content with self-government within the British Empire but with the right to secession, enjoying control over defence and economic affairs and "the right to refer, if necessary, to an independent tribunal" India's 'public debt' to Britain and other British claims. *They were ready to accept adjustments during the transition period.*[120] One may bear in mind what Jawaharlal wrote in another context: "We were used to vague exaggerations and flowery language and always there was an idea of a bargain in our minds."[121] Even with its exaggerations, the joint letter was a far cry from the pledge taken on the Independence Day that "India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence."

Yet the terms for, to put it rather bluntly, capitulation were raised higher than what the mahatma had been offering in post-Lahore days. Did he give some rope to somebody who was obsessed with his own image? At Lahore he had made a concession, however qualified, to such people and to the genuine left-wing of the Congress only to repudiate it immediately after. To Irwin, the terms seemed "impossible". In another joint letter, dated 5 September, Gandhi, Patel, Mrs Naidu and Jairamdas Doulatram said that they wanted "full Responsible Government or full Self-Government or whatever other term it is to be known by" but "on an absolutely voluntary basis." They explained that "The Congress desires to harm no single legitimate interest by whomsoever acquired." They did not feel disappointed "for the *apparent* failure of the peace negotiations" as "a few months' suffering" of the Indians had not yet converted the British rulers.[122]

The behind-the-scenes negotiations continued. A letter from Thakurdas to Graham Pole, M. P., dated 19 September, states that Gandhi's Quaker friend, Horace Alexander, had come armed with a letter from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, and after seeing Irwin and Schuster at Simla, visited Gandhi at Yeravda. Both Simla and Yeravda had advised him to see Thakurdas, who "felt that after the *spade-work* done by Mr Jayakar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru his efforts would be useful." Alexander also went to see Motilal at Allahabad. Thakurdas wrote : 'I am convinced that the correct thing to do would be to try and get the Congress down to take a reasonable view, and *I have seen many indications here, which I have communicated to Sir Frederick Sykes, Governor of Bombay, of the chances of the Congress taking up such an attitude.*"[123]

On 23 December, in a letter to Alexander, then in England, Gandhi explained his as well as Jawaharlal's position on the question of India's 'public debt' to Britain so that this issue might not prove a thorn on the road to a settlement. He added : "*If the RTC results in doing something worthy of the great sacrifice of the nation and therefore of acceptance, I should be delighted.*"[124] Birla had correctly anticipated that even the minimum Congress demands would not be accepted by the raj until the RTC had met.[125]

On the basis of his personal contacts with Gandhi, Alexander wrote in the London *Spectator* of 3 January 1931 that Gandhi "would welcome a return to peace and co-operation as soon as it could be honestly obtained....His influence is still great, but there dangerous and uncontrollable forces are gathering strength daily."[126]

Sumit Sarkar has noticed a "starting [? startling] change" in Gandhi "sometime in the middle of February 1931"—a change from the "firm" stand adopted in the joint letter of 15 August. He asserts that "Gandhi's initial stand after his release on 26 January was also quite uncompromising." According to Sarkar, this "firm", "uncompromising" stand wilted under the pressure of business magnates sometime in the middle of February.[127]

Such a view is wholly unwarranted by facts. Before his release Gandhi was always eager for, never averse to, a settlement on terms which smacked of surrender. On the day of his release Gandhi declared in his message to the Indian people :

"I have come out of jail with an absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity, unbiased in argument and prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other delegates on their return."[128]

Next day Gandhi told the press that "after conference with the friends who are coming from the RTC," it might be "found that the Premier's statement [of 19 January] affords sufficient ground for the Congress to tender co-operation...." "Speaking for myself", he said, "I am hankering for peace." He suspended his judgement on the premier's statement until the conference with the loyalist friends, Sapru and Sastri, returning from the RTC. In his cable to the *Daily Herald*, he stated : "Personally [I] am eagerly searching for avenues leading [to] honourable peace...."[129] In this cable and subsequent speeches and writings he criticized some of the government's acts of repression. In his letter of 1 February to the Viceroy, he assured him that he was "simply waiting for a sign in order to enable me to respond to your appeal." At the same time he mentioned some acts of repression, which he described as "highly ominous signs", and urged an inquiry into police excesses. Not surprisingly, he condemned not the raj's policy or the black acts or ordinances it had promulgated but some excesses that flowed from them. Even the excesses he mentioned would pale into insignificance beside what the raj's men had committed in various places—Chittagong and other parts of Bengal, Peshawar, Sholapur and so on.[180]

On 17 January the Viceroy, speaking in the Central Legislative Assembly, had made an appeal to Gandhi to stop civil disobedience and co-operate and said that *there was little difference between the goal which the government had before them and the goal of the Congress.*[181] At the concluding session of the RTC on 19 January, British Premier Ramsay MacDonald made an important statement. He said that all parties attending the conference had agreed that there should be "a Federation of all-India, embracing both the Indian States and British India" and that "responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial," subject to "statutory safeguards." The "subjects of Defence and External Affairs" would "be reserved to the Governor-General", who would also be armed with emergency powers to maintain the tranquillity of the State" and to protect "the constitutional rights of minorities." Subject to certain provisions, the Indian Government would have financial responsibility except for control of expenditure on reserved subjects. The provinces would enjoy ' the greatest possible measure of self-government", but the governors would have "special powers". Before concluding, MacDonald assured the Congress that if it responded to the Viceroy's appeal and wished "to co-operate on the general lines of this declaration, steps will be taken to enlist their services."[182] On 26 January, as the government issued orders for the release of Gandhi and all other members of the Congress Working Committee—elected ones as well as those who had acted as their substitutes during the former's incarceration—, the Viceroy appealed in a statement to the Congress leaders to reciprocate and promised that "if civil quiet were proclaimed and assured, the Government would not be backward in response."[183]

Did the rulers of the British empire make these appeals and release the Congress leaders without receiving positive hints that these would achieve positive results ? Were they merely building castles in the air ? Or, were they inspired by the Christian virtues of love and charity in doing all this ? These Christian virtues failed to work when, on the day of the release of the Congress leaders, Subhas Bose, then Mayor of Calcutta, was leading a peaceful procession in that city to observe the 'Independence Day'. The procession was suddenly attacked without warning by British mounted police and many, including Subhas, received serious injuries. After arrest, Subhas was kept in police custody for twenty-four hours without food and drink and without the wounds being attended to. Next day he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for rioting. Later, X-ray revealed that two of his fingers in his right hand had been fractured.[134]

It is worth noting that the Prime Minister's declaration offered the Congress leaders more than they had bargained for. The offer did not fall short of what the Nehru Constitution, upheld by Gandhi as India's 'charter of independence,' had craved for. It too had envisaged British control over defence and foreign affairs, protection for British capital, India's full liability for the 'public debt' to Britain, the power of the British king to override all legislations passed by the Indian legislatures, emergency powers for the Governor-General, federation between British India and the native States, and so on.[135] During the protracted behind-the-scenes negotiations in 1929 Gandhi and Motilal had sought no more than some 'ingredients' of self-government with defence, political and foreign affairs under British control. Irwin was not wrong when he claimed in the Central Legislative Assembly on 17 January that the goal which the raj had before it and the goal of the Congress leaders were not different. That was also the view of Thakurdas and other business magnates.[135a]

MacDonald's declaration outlined a scheme which also had three essential parts : Federation, 'Indian responsibility' and 'reservations or safeguards' which insisted on British control over defence and foreign affairs, and control in respect of the position of the minorities, emergency situations, India's financial 'obligations' and the like—'reservations or safeguards' described hypocritically in the Gandhi-Irwin agreement as 'in the interests of India'.[136] Under the Prime Minister's declaration, the raj was prepared to *share* control over the financial policy at the centre and hand over control over provincial finances. This scheme far exceeded the mahatma's 'substense of independence' and he had not sought even the entire 'substance' for the immediate future. As there was an essential agreement between the British scheme and the aim of the Congress leadership, Gandhi hardly felt any need for raising inconvenient issues about India's political future during his long interviews with Irwin before signing the pact with him.

How radical was the Big Bourgeoisie

Sumit Sarkar is far from correct when he asserts : "In the first months of Civil Disobedience, there is ample evidence regarding this new, relatively far more militant stance of the leading representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie."[137] Bombay's millowners—Tata, Petit, Jehangir, Thackersey, Manmohandas Ramji (founder of the Indian Merchants' Chamber), Pheroze Sethna, Homi Mody (President of the Bombay Millowners' Association) and others—were opposed to civil disobedience from the very beginning, welcomed Irwin's statement of 31 October 1929 and lent full support to the government.[138] Thakurdas too hailed the statement and insisted that it should be accepted unconditionally.[139] Thakurdas, Sethna and Jehangir denounced civil disobedience "through the medium of the *Indian Daily Mail*, mouthpiece of big business." The Bombay millowners, Indian and European, set up in mid-1930 the Indian Industries Association to combat civil disobedience.[140]

In July Lalji Naranji and several other leading businessmen of Bombay wrote to Jayakar, Irwin's emissary to Gandhi, emphasizing the need for a settlement. When Jayakar and Sapru met the Congress leaders at Yeravda in mid-August, he read out two letters from Bombay businessmen, pleading that civil disobedience would be the ruin of Bombay's commerce.[141]

How militant was the stance of G. D. Birla, the most 'radical', 'nationalist' Indian bourgeois ? Birla was strongly in favour of accepting Irwin's statement of 31 October 1929. On 30 October, he wrote to Thakurdas that he "won't allow the opportunity to be missed. Viceroy seems to be sincere, and therefore I think his hands ought to be strengthened."[142] And on 11 November Birla wrote to Gandhi pleading for the acceptance of Irwin's offer. He said that he did not expect full dominion status, but what they would receive from the British would "make an impact on our left-wingers. Thus we stand to gain from both sides. The sum and substance of my submission is that your meeting with the British Cabinet will be highly beneficial to us."[143]

Birla was more far-sighted than the other business magnates, did not oppose civil disobedience and contributed substantial sums to Gandhi's coffers. But it would be wrong to infer that he was quite radical. On 31 May 1930, he wrote to Thakurdas : "It is certain, however, that the things cannot continue as they are at present. A solution must be found out and I think we are nearer to the solution today than we were six months ago."[144] On 16 January 1931, Birla wrote to Thakurdas : "We should, therefore, have two objects in view : One is that we should jump in at the most opportune time to try for a conciliation and the other is that we should not do anything which might weaken the hands of those through whose efforts we have arrived at this stage."[145]

Three days after, with MacDonald's declaration of 19 January, the time became 'opportune', and Birla did jump in to try for a 'conciliation'. The Indian big bourgeoisie aspired to achieve *not* independence, *not* dominion status, but some control over the financial policy of the government. The declaration of 19 January assured them that they would *share* control over the finances of the central government and have rather full control over the provincial finances.

As an instance of the 'radicalism' of the big bourgeoisie, Sumit Sarkar and others cite the resolution of the FICCI adopted in May 1930. It stated that "unless Gandhiji attended the [RT] Conference or at least approved of it, none of the member-bodies should nominate any representative of Indian commercial interests to the Conference nor was it desirable that any members of member-bodies should accept invitations to participate in it in their individual capacity."[146] It should be noted that the Federation, though led by the big bourgeoisie, had many member-bodies which represented small industrialists and what Gordon called 'marketeers', and sometimes had to endorse their demands *formally*. According to Venkatasubbiah, opinion was divided on the second part of the above resolution. G. D. Birla held that "the ban imposed by the

May meeting was unjust and wrong and should be lifted." To quote Venkatasubbiah again, "Later the Federation let it be known that what it told its member-bodies in this regard should be taken as *recommendatory* and not mandatory."[147]

Prominent representatives of the bourgeoisie like J. K. Mehta (secretary, Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay), Jamal Mohamed Saib (president of the FICCI for 1931-2) and Amritlal Ojha (another future president of the FICCI) started a move in July 1930 to get the Federation to reconsider the earlier decision and attend the RTC.[148] Sir Shri Ram, then president of the FICCI, wrote to Thakurdas on 29 July, enclosing the draft of a letter which he intended to send to the members of the FICCI Committee. It put forward a plea for reconsideration of the resolution and for a decision to attend the RTC.[149] Significantly, it was Birla who wanted Thakurdas to attend the RTC.[150]

The criticism of the government's fiscal and monetary policies is also cited by Sarkar and others as further instances of the 'radicalism' or 'militant nationalism' of the business magnates. It cannot be too much stressed that such 'radicalism' was shared by British expatriate capitalists.[151]

The Settlement

On reaching Bombay after his release from prison, Gandhi had long talks with Lalji Naranji, F. E. Dinshaw and Sir Chunilal Mehta among others. Birla was at Allahabad when the mahatma reached there and the Congress Working Committee met. "How I realized", said Birla later to Findlater Stewart of the India Office, "India's progress was bound with proper understanding between the two races. I worked for a settlement in 1929 before Gandhiji saw Irwin followed by a breakdown....Then came Sir B. L. Mitter sent by Irwin to see me. Went to Allahabad. Played some part in pact."[152] He was also in Delhi during Gandhi-Irwin talks.[152a]

Thakurdas also played his role. In reply to Thakurdas's telegram seeking an interview, Gandhi wired on 9 February : "Earlier you come better."[153] On the same day the Viceroy reported to the Secretary of State : "Purshotamdas told me [the day before] however that he was pleased with the trend of opinion in commercial circles and thinks that they now definitely want to find ways of peace. This view is also supported by Sykes [the Bombay governor]. Purshotamdas will probably go to see Gandhi at Allahabad in order to try to put commercial pressure on him."[154] It is significant that "the leading representatives of the bourgeoisie" were putting pressure not on the raj but on the mahatma at the instance of the raj.

Indeed, Gandhi needed no pressure to be converted to the view of the business magnates. Despite his occasional rhetoric about police excesses and demand for inquiry, he had decided to do everything "to terminate civil disobedience."[155]

Sapru, Jayakar and Srinivasa Sastri reached Allahabad on 13 February and had long talks with the Working Committee. Things became very smooth. Sapru kept Irwin informed of the proceedings.[156] (Among Indians, there were two categories of purveyors of 'inside information' about Congress affairs to the raj. Sapru, Sastri, Thakurdas, Birla and the like belonged to one category; the Congress leaders themselves formed another category. More of that later.)

Next day, Gandhi sought an interview with Irwin. Then, between 17 February and 4 March 1930, there were seven interviews between the supreme leader of the Congress and the Viceroy. The talks, as Gandhi said, were "conducted in a most friendly manner and with much sweetness." And he left "no stone unturned to attain peace with honour." Sapru and Jayakar, the "sub-Viceroys" (to use Gandhi's words), and Sastri stayed on in Delhi at the request of the mahatma till the Gandhi-Irwin agreement was signed.[157]

During the talks the mahatma showed not much interest in the political shape of future India. What he was interested in were the 'practical points' that would arise *after* the civil disobedience movement was discontinued, that is, the 'face-saving device'. The Viceroy made it abundantly clear to him that "the scope of the further constitutional discussions" would be confined to further considerations of "the scheme for the constitutional government of India discussed at the RTC". Besides Federation and Indian responsibility, "safeguards needed to secure such matters as Crown control of defence and external affairs ; the position of minorities ; the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations" were an essential part of the scheme. Discussions at the next RTC would have to be conducted within the framework of this scheme. "To this he [Gandhi] assented." While agreeing to it, Gandhi raised the question of his right to raise the issue of 'secession' from the empire. When Irwin pointed out that the question was an "academic" one and would have "a very damaging effect", if raised, Gandhi agreed.[158]

The discussion during the interviews were mainly confined not to the repeal of the salt law (which Gandhi did not demand) but to its application, and to boycott, picketing, restoration of land and property confiscated during the movement, release of political prisoners and inquiry into police excesses after civil disobedience was terminated. He assured the Viceroy that civil disobedience would not be resumed until the Conference was over and "hoped that it would never be necessary at all." On most of the questions Gandhi surrendered. Boycott and picketing were given up as a political weapon and Irwin was sure that "if you can get rid of the political-weapon drive of it and have it purely as an economic and social thing, it will be dead in three weeks." Gandhi dropped the demand for inquiry into police excesses when Irwin pointed out that Government would be in a difficulty. Those "undergoing imprisonment in connection with the civil disobedience movement for offences which did not involve violence" would be released but several hundreds of political prisoners against whom there were charges of violence., detenus and labour leaders would continue to languish in prison. And 'Soldiers and police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders [like the Garhwali soldiers]...will not come within the scope of the amnesty.'[159] The return of the confiscated land in Gujarat was a more tricky problem and both Gandhi and Vallabhbhai were very much interested in it, but Irwin conceded little.

Significantly, at his second interview with Irwin in this series, the mahatma confided to the Viceroy that Subhas was his "opponent".[160]

In a statement to the press on 5 March, the day the Gandhi-

Irwin agreement was signed, Gandhi declared : "The Congress has never made any bid for victory." He said : "The Congress has embarked deliberately, though provisionally, on *a career of co-operation* ...I worked for the settlement, not in order to break it to pieces at the very first opportunity, but in order to strain every nerve to make absolutely final what today is provisional...." Gandhi had told Irwin that "he was going to throw his whole heart and soul into trying to co-operate in constitution-building .."[161]

The Viceroy told the Secretary of State that it might have been possible to obtain a stiffer settlement but he thought it wiser "to have carried Gandhi with a personal appeal and commitment so that he threw himself with goodwill into searching for a permanent settlement. To his governors he repeated the argument that *Gandhi was an ally worth having* .. "[162]

The Gandhi-Irwin agreement was endorsed unanimously by the Congress Working Committee. Jawaharlal appeared to be for a while somewhat disconsolate and feared that the "safeguards and reservations" meant "a limitation of our freedom in regard to defence, external affairs, finance, and the public debt." But as his colleagues put on them a happier interpretation, he accepted it.[163] Soon after, he was more positive. Speaking at Bombay on 15 March he claimed : "We fought the mightiest empire in the world. We were unarmed but our general had given us a weapon, which, though non-violent, brought our enemies to their knees."[164] But these brave words hardly altered the view of large sections of the people, even in Gandhi's own Gujarat, that the agreement was a 'betrayal'.[165]

After agreeing to the Crown's control over defence, foreign affairs and so on, the general also was proclaiming : "I must say that the Congress position is unequivocal and quite simple. The Congress is out to win *purna swaraj* at the earliest possible moment." When pulled up by Irwin, he told him privately that he did not mean what he said.[166]

The Myth

Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev had been sentenced to death and were hanged on 23 March. At that time, as Sitaramayya has said, Bhagat Singh's name was "as popular as Gandhi's." In its publication the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, observed that for a time Bhagat Singh "bade fair to oust Mr Gandhi as the foremost political figure of the day."[167]

The people did not take the executions lying down. "The cry, 'Bhagat Singh Zindabad'," as Gandhi's disciple Tendulkar writes, "resounded throughout India. March 24, 1931 was observed as the day of mourning. In Lahore the authorities warned European women to keep for ten days within the European quarters. In Bombay and Madras, there were angry demonstrations. Armed flying squads patrolled in Calcutta. The demonstrators came in clash with the police, in which 141 people were killed, 586 wounded and 341 arrested." The feeling ran so high that even Sir Abdur Rahim and Sir Cowasji Jehangir, both loyalists *par excellence*, walked out of the Central Assembly on 25 March as a protest against the executions.[168]

People have been fed on the myth that during his talks with Irwin before signing the agreement, Gandhi had tried his utmost to get the sentences on BhagatSingh, Rajguru and Sukhdev commuted. Sitaramayya wrote : "Gandhi, in spite of his best efforts, had not been able to get the sentences of these three youths commuted." Jawaharlal wrote : "Nor did the Government agree to Gandhiji's *hard pleading* for the commutation of Bhagat Singh's death sentence. ...He pleaded in vain." In the same vein did also Tendulkar write.[169] On 26 March, three days after the executions, the mahatma himself, greeted by hostile demonstrations, declared at the Karachi Congress : 'There can be therefore no excuse for suspicion that I did not want to save Bhagat Singh....I pleaded with the Viceroy as best I could. I brought all the persuasion at my command to bear on him."[170]

Though Gandhi emphasized that these were the words of a life-long votary of truth, facts tell a different tale.

In his article "Gandhi and Bhagat Singh", D. P. Das writes : "Alan Campbell-Johnson, in his book *Lord Halifax*...referred to an understanding between Gandhi and Irwin that Bhagat Singh should not get any reprieve."[171] In his record of his meeting with Gandhi on 18 February 1931, Irwin noted that at the end of it

Gandhi casually mentioned the case of Bhagat Singh. Irwin wrote: Gandhi "did *not* plead for commutation....But he did ask for postponement in present circumstances."[172] The correctness of Irwin's version is borne out by Gandhi's own report on this meeting. It states that there was a third "*tidbit*" which both he and Irwin had greatly enjoyed. It was about Bhagat Singh. "I told him: 'This has no connection with our discussion, and it may even be *inappropriate* on my part to mention it. But if you want to make the present atmosphere more favourable, you should *suspend* Bhagat Singh's execution.' The Viceroy liked this very much. He said: '...Commutation of sentence is a different thing, but suspension is certainly worth considering'." The mahatma said that he desired "suspension of sentence in order that there may not be unnecessary turmoil in the country....I would not take it ill even if you do not give any reply on this issue."[173] In other words, Gandhi suggested that the executions should take place at a more convenient time. He did not raise this question again before signing the pact with Irwin on 5 March.

In his record of a meeting with Gandhi on 19 March, Irwin noted that as Gandhi was leaving, he said that "he had seen in the Press the intimation of his [Bhagat Singh's] execution for March 24th. This was an unfortunate day, as it coincided with the arrival of the new President of the Congress at Karachi and there would be much popular excitement." Irwin explained to him why he had rejected "the possibility of postponement till after the Congress". Irwin noted: "He appeared to appreciate the force of the arguments, and said no more."[174]

In his note on his meeting with Gandhi on the same day—19 March—Home Secretary Emerson wrote that Gandhi "did not seem to me to be particularly concerned in the matter." Gandhi promised to co-operate to prevent outbreaks of disorder which Emerson feared. When Emerson informed him next day that a protest meeting was going to be held under the presidentship of Subhas in Delhi that evening and asked for his assistance, the mahatma replied: "I have already taken every precaution possible, ...I suggest that there should be no display of police force and no interference in the meeting. *Irritation* is undoubtedly there. It would be better to allow it to find vent through meetings, etc."[175]

On 23 March, barely a few hours before the executions were to take place, Gandhi appealed to Irwin for commutation *or* suspension of the sentences. The situation was getting explosive. So, Gandhi entreated the Viceroy : "Since you seem to value my influence such as it is in favour of peace, *do not please unnecessarily make my position, difficult as it is, almost too difficult for future work.*"[176] Perhaps the mahatma felt that though this belated appeal was sure to fail, he might be able to use it, as he actually did,[177] to prop up the myth that he had tried his best to get the sentences commuted. (About this time he also wrote in his Gujarati paper : "The Government certainly had the right to hang these men." "Hence our dharma is to swallow our anger, abide by the settlement and carry out our duty"[178] was the constant refrain of his speeches).

In a statement issued on the day *after* the executions, Jawaharlal said : "I have remained absolutely silent during their last days lest a word of mine may injure the prospect of commutation." Since his release he had been afraid that a word of his in favour of commutation might endanger its chances and so he had been discreetly silent ! In his usual rhetorical style he added that "when England speaks to us and talks of a settlement there will be the corpse of Bhagat Singh between us..."[179] He was saying this when they had already made a provisional settlement and were yearning for 'permanent peace'.

Karachi

The leaders selected Karachi, which was rather far from the madding crowd's 'criminal' strife, as the venue of a hastily organized Congress session to endorse the Gandhi-Irwin agreement. The session was held at the end of March. Jawaharlal moved the resolution which endorsed the provisional settlement ensuring British control over defence and so on and at the same time declared that the goal of complete independence remained intact.[180] Opposing an amendment at the Congress, Gandhi successfully claimed for the Congress delegation its unfettered right to reach an agreement at the RTC without its being subject to ratification by the AICC or a special session of the Congress.[101] Gandhi was appointed by the Working Committee the sole Congress delegate to the RTC.

Subhas wrote that the opponents of the pact like him did not "have much support from the elected delegates [to the Congress]... though among the general public and particularly the youths they had larger support." They decided to make a statement at the Congress that they disapproved of the pact but would refrain from dividing the house.[102] This failure to challenge the leadership which was seeking self-government for India within the British empire through discussion and negotiation marked the weakness of what Palme Dutt called 'Left Nationalism'. Alienated from the peasantry and the working class and depending for support on the petty bourgeoisie (other than the peasantry) and the national bourgeoisie, it was too weak to challenge the leadership of the Congress and go to war against the raj.

The Karachi Congress adopted a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes. While recognising certain fundamental rights of the people and upholding "control by the State of key industries and ownership of mineral resources", it did not recommend the abolition of feudal landlordism or even partial annulment of the peasants' usurious debts nor did it uphold the worker's right to strike.[103]

The call for civil disobedience which the Congress leadership issued when the revolutionary wave was rising did contribute to the rousing of the sections of the people who were untouched by it and helped it to rise higher. The leadership chose to ride the wave to bring it under control and to project its own anti-imperialist image while seeking all the time to stem and disperse it and anxiously waiting for some concessions both as a pretext to ditch the movement and as a gain for the big bourgeoisie.

One should also note that the alienation of the Congress from the Muslims was a serious weakness of the Civil Disobedience Movement. By adopting the Nehru Committee Report, Gandhi and the Nehrus antagonized not only the Ali brothers and Jinnah but the Muslim masses (except in the North-West Frontier Province), who came to believe that, as Shaukat Ali said, the Congress was fighting for a Hindu raj. They never again took part in the movements initiated by the Congress.

Ramsay MacDonald's declaration of 19 January 1931 was a significant step taken by the raj to guide 'all this Indian nationalism' along the imperial channel and prevent it from getting 'deflected into separatist lines.'[184] The Gandhi-Irwin agreement represented the triumph of this policy, and the Karachi Congress put its seal of approval on this policy. The working class organizations were weak and disrupted ; the peasant struggles lacked any central revolutionary leadership to co-ordinate and guide them. In the absence of a mature revolutionary leadership, the civil disobedience movement helped to consolidate the leadership of the political representatives of the big bourgeoisie. So could Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Karachi Congress, declare : 'If India is to reach her independence through consultation and agreement, it is reasonable to suppose that there will be British connection.'

NOTES

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6 *CWG*, XXXVIII, 317.
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14 Ibid.
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20 *CWG*, XL, 226, 260.
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39 Nanda, *The Nehrus*, 318-9.
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41 GOI, Intelligence Bureau, *India and Communism* (1935), 260.
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47 Cited in G. K. Lieten, "The Civil Disobedience Movement and the National Bourgeoisie," in *Social Scientist*, May 1988, 34.
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52 *CWG*, XLII, 372, 376.
53. *SWN*, IV, 236-7.
54 R. C. Majumdar, op cit, III, 273-4.
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63 *CWG*, XLIII, 306, 334.
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66 *CWG*. XLIII, 156, 161, 196.
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135a See p. 66 above.

136 For the text of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement, see *CWG*, XLV, 482-6.

137 Sarkar, "The Logic", op cit, 94.

138 A. D. D. Gordon, "Businessmen and Politics in a Developing Colonial Economy", in Dewey and Hopkins (eds.), *The Imperial Impact*, 240; see also pp. 55-9 above.

139 Thakurdas to M. Nehru, 30 Oct. and 4 Nov. 1929; Thakurdas to Sapru, 27 Dec. 1929 and 8 Jan. 1930; Sapru to Thakurdas, 6 Jan. 1930: PT Papers, File 91, Part I; see also pp. 54-6, 58-9 above.

140 A. D. D. Gordon. "Businessmen", op cit, 260, n. 87. Curiously, in a pamphlet the Indian Industries Association complained that the Bombay hartals and boycott were being manipulated from Ahmedabad to serve its interests (Ibid; A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, 298; see also Brown, *Gandhi*, 169; B. Chatterji, op cit, 539, fn. 89). Thakurdas's biographer writes that Thakurdas "knew only too well that even when an apparent trade boycott of British cotton-houses was imposed by Congress circles and their sympathisers, the latter reaped a rich harvest through backdoor business, purchasing cotton from the same British firms at discount rates. To him, as he often bluntly declared, the whole thing appeared to be nothing short of a fraud" (Frank Moraes, op cit, 202).

141 Brown, *Gandhi*, 161, 164.

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143 Birla, *Bapu*, I, 180-1.

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146 H. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, 18.

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151 See S. K. Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, 215-7; A. D. D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, 184; Tomlinson, *The Political Economy*, 53, 84, 125.

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162 See Brown, *Gandhi*, 186.

163 See Nehru's note on the settlement, *CWG*, XLV, 431-2.

164 *SWN*, IV, 495.

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166 *CWG*, XLV, 278, 306; see p. 86 above.

167 Sitaramayya, op cit, I, 456; *Terrorism in India*, 78.

168 Tendulkar, op cit, III, 94-5.

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170 *CWG*, XLV, 349, 351.

171 Das, "Gandhi and Bhagat Singh", *Mainstream*, Independence Day Number, 1979, 15.

172 *CWG*, XLV, 196; see also D. P. Das, op cit.

173 *CWG*, XLV, 260.

174 Ibid, 315-6.

175 Ibid, 440, 448, 316.

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178 Ibid, 360-1.

179 *SWN*, IV, 500.

180 See pp. 55-6 above.

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182 S. C. Bose, op cit, 206.

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184 See p. 107 above.

GLOSSARY

Acharya	Preceptor ; teacher.
Bania	Member of a trading caste.
Banian	Till about the beginning of the 19th century, the *banian* served as an agent and middleman for the East India Company's servants and British Free Merchants on a commission basis. He was "the personal factotum of his European 'master'...a combination of steward, secretary and business partner". Later, he became a "guarantee broker" attached to a European firm. He had to guarantee the reliability of other Indian businessmen dealing with the firm and received a commission on sales.
Crore	ten million.
Dharma	religion ; duty.
Hartal	complete stoppage of work to register protest.
Hat	village market held on certain fixed days in the week.
Hijrat	leaving one's country to avoid repression.
Khadi (or *Khaddar*)	hand-woven cloth from hand-spun yarn.
Mamlatdar	revenue-officer in charge of a *taluka*.
Muhajir	Muslim who, resenting Britain's treatment of the Caliph of Turkey, left his country on religious grounds.
Shroff	Originally a money-changer and indigenous banker, often with branches at different commercial centres and combining banking activities like money-lending and discounting of bills of exchange with trade.
Swadeshi	literally, of one's own country. The *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal urged people to buy indigenous products.
Swaraj	self-rule ; self-government.
Taluka	administrative sub-division of a district.

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